ALEXHALEYS

QUEEN

The Story of an American Family

ALEX HALEY

AND DAVID STEVENS

AVON BOOKS & NEW YORK

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Dedicated to the memory of Alex Haley

And to the African, Kanyuro, of the Kikuyu, who saved my life during a small skirmish in an obscure war on the Kenya/Uganda border, and gave me the priceless gift of the years since then.

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The role played by David Wolper in Alex's career, and, latterly, my own, is remarkable, but I would also like to record my gratitude to Bernard Sofronski, who first had the idea of associating me with Alex and this project.

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To Bubby, with love. And Rooney, Myrtle, Maggie, and Dudley. And Morgan, whom we miss.

On Alex's behalf, it is ittcumbent on me to record his gratitude to Myran E. Haley, his wife and valued associate, and to George Sims, his lifelong friend and master researcher.

PART ONE

BLOODLINES

Hurra for the Hickory Tree! Hurra for the Hickory Tree! Its branches will wave 0’er tyranny’s grave And bloomfor the brave And the fi-ee.

-PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN SONG, 1832

On a cold and rainy April night, in a guarded garret somewhere in Dublin, James Jackson 11, known as Jamie, swore a most sacred, solemn oath.

“In the awful presence of God, 1, Jamie Jackson, do voluntarily swear and declare that I will form a brotherhood among Irishmen of every religion, for equal, full, and adequate representation of all Irishmen. Not hopes, fears, rewards, or punishment shall ever induce me to inform on, or to give evidence against, any member of this society. So help me God.”

It was the year 1797. Jamie was barely fifteen. There were eleven other men in the room, for no cell of the illegal association could be larger than twelve. He had been sponsored into the group by his uncle Henry.

Partly because of the eloquence with which young Jamie voiced his convictions, partly because they needed every man they could get in the fight against the occupying British, but mostly out of respect for his uncle, not one black bean was cast against him.

Three months previously, a fleet of forty French ships carrying twelve thousand men had sailed toward Bantry Bay, in southern Ireland, to drive the British from the country. On the flagship, Indomitable, was Wolfe Tone, who had persuaded Napoleon that the British could be defeated. The weather went against them, and high winds and heavy rainfall frustrated the landing of men from the French fleet. The storm raged for six days, forcing the ships, one by one, to cut cable and seek safe harbor, until the Indomitable stood alone. Then she too turned about and limped back to France.

When news of the retreat at Bantry Bay reached Dublin Castle, Lord Clair, the

Lord Chancellor of Ireland, personally appointed by King George 111, made a jubilant proclamation.

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“It was a Protestant victory! It saw God on our side!”

lie intensified the suppression of the United Ireland movement, he ordered massive recriminations against the intransigent Irish peasants, and finally he declared martial law.

The ferocity with which the British troops enforced his orders shocked even the most moderate of men, and Jamie, appalled by what he saw, made his decision and formally cast his lot with the Irish cause.

He was not the only member of his Protestant family to have made such a dangerous commitment.

His older brother John had abandoned Ireland and gone to America with three of his brothers, but his older sister Eleanor was married to Oliver Bond, a leader in the secret association. His sister Martha had married Hu-h Hanna, whom Jamie believed to be a “Peep 0’ Day Boy,” a vigilante group mostly from the peasant class. Under cover of night, toward dawn, the Peep 0’ Days took what small vengeance they could against the occupying British troops.

His sister Sara was engaged to Jimmy Hanna, Hugh’s brother, who had been tutor to Jamie when he was a boy in Ballybay, and had helped to awaken his social conscience. Jamie’s uncle, Henry Jackson, with whom he lodged while he was at school in Dublin, was leader of the small cell that Jamie had joined.

Yet Jamie was an unlikely revolutionary. The eleventh of twelve children, he

was bom to comparative wealth, and grew up in an atmosphere of privilege and security. His father, James Jackson, owned many acres of land and a linen mill at Ballybay, near Carrickmacross, in County Monaghan. The British were well disposed to those native-born Irish who espoused their religion and respected their authority, and James Jackson had flourished under their colonial dominion.

A stem, intolerant man, James Jackson loved the English way of life, and had little sympathy for the Catholic peasants. It appalled him that so many of his children had chosen to embrace the nationalist cause, and thus put everything he had worked for and achieved, and their own inheritance, at risk. He could not understand that it was the bloodless austerity of his heart and manner that had driven his children to seek love

and companionship in the camaraderie of political passion. He was dispassionate toward his family and, except in matters of procreation, detached frorn his wife. Other than the marital bed, his only passion was his hobby, the breeding of champion racehorses.

When Jamie was eighteen months old, his mother gave birth to another boy, Washington, and died four months later, at thirty-five, worn out from childbearing and a loveless marriage. Jugs, the family housekeeper, became surrogate mother to Jamie and his infant brother, and she came to love Jamie as the son she had never had, and he basked in her affection.

Gravel-voiced, toothless, bosomy, and superstitious, the Catholic Jugs had served in the Jackson household as loyal friend and confidante to Jamie’s mother, Mary Steele Jackson, whom she had nursed from infancy.

After Mary’s death, she ran the house with peasant discipline, faced trouble by first crossing herself and then wielding a big stick, and tended toward earthy language after a few nips of her master’s brandy.

She knew every Irish superstition in the book, and practiced most of them, especially those that were said to placate the fairies.

It was she who introduced Jamie to the world outside his father's bleak and loveless estate. Several times a week, Jugs went to visit her sister, Maureen, and her husband, Patrick, a tenant farmer on the neighboring Hamilton land. Maureen had a son, Sean, of Jamie's age and Jugs took Jamie with her on these visits because she thought the boy needed a companion. They became more than playmates. From widely diverse backgrounds, Jamie and Sean quickly became fast friends, and grew up in each other's company.

Maureen's simple home was paradise for a young boy whose own was cold and formal. The cottage had a thatch roof, mud walls, an earthen floor, and a vibrant sense of life, of passion and laughter and anger. The loom was the largest piece of furniture, and in the winter the cow lived inside with the rest of the family.

Jamie loved the simple formalities of peasant life. Whenever he went in through the door he would say, "Blessings upon all I see," as Jugs had taught him. He teamed some words of Gaelic. When Maureen churned butter, she recited to him the

legends of it. If milk splashed during the churning he would be doomed to marry a drunken spouse. If someone "blinked" your cow, he learned how to break the curse. When the butter finally broke, he twisted the staff three times, and placed it over the mouth of the chum, and he helped her smear a little of the butter on the wall of the cottage as an offering to the fairies.

He loved the stories that the shanachies, the traveling storytellers, recited of the leprechauns and the little folk, and he believed in the fairies, who lived on the mist-shrouded Crieve Mountain nearby. He loved the great history of the Gaelic people, and of the blessed Saint Patrick who had converted them to Christianity, and had rid the island of snakes by tapping with his staff upon the earth. He learned of the glories of the time of kings and poets, and of the Viking raiders, who were defeated at Clontarf by Brian Bom. He heard the long history of invasion by the British, who were determined to subjugate the Emerald Isle, from Henry 11 to the ruthless, hated Oliver Cromwell. Of the Protestant settlers

brought from England and Scotland to be settled in the north, to reduce the influence of the Catholics. He heard of repression and rebellion, evictions and retaliations, and the suppression of the Catholic religion that followed the Irish defeat at the Battle of the Boyne.

He wept when he heard the stories of the potato blight, and the awful famine that followed, which decimated the population and forced many of those who did not die to emigrate, mostly to America. He cursed the British for what they did then, expropriating yet more land, because the peasants, who could not afford to eat, could not pay their rent. He gasped at the stories of the White Boys, who refused to pay tax, and rode through the night cutting off the noses and cars of tax collectors, but never harming the innocent.

He wept again at the tales of the reprisals against the White Boys, how they put the tar cap of molten, burning pitch on the peasant's head, and mocked him while he screamed in agony, unable to remove the fiery mess.

His blood ran hot at the stories of indiscriminate flogging and looting and rape, or the British soldier's sport of setting fire to the hay in a peasant's cart and ramming the flaming

cart into the man's house, laughing while the cottage burned. Most of all, he loved Sean, and tried to emulate his hero in every way. A moderate and studious boy, who grieved for the mother he had never known and sorely missed his father's affections, Jamie found in the rollicking, boisterous Sean a friend who filled the emotional void in his heart. Through the days of their childhood they were inseparable, roaming the lanes between Ballybay and Carrickmacross, the daring Sean leading the wide-eyed Jamie into scrapes and adventures and pranks.

Sean taught Jamie to play the wild game of hurley, and how to cut turf from the peat bogs, stack it in barrows, and take it back to the cottage to dry, to be used as fuel for the fire. They visited Sean's father at the Jackson linen mill, and Jamie watched in amazement the arduous labor, as the flax was hackled and scutched, and the peasant women toiled over great steaming kettles boiling the spun thread to purify it. They went to the annual Ballybay Fair together, and

reveled in the fun of it, the tinkers and fiddlers, and the increasingly drunken peasants dancing increasingly drunken gigs. They giggled at the man with the shillelagh and long tailcoat who earned his living by challenging stalwarts to "step on his coat" and fight with him. They watched the races, dazzled by the bright colors of the silks the jockeys wore, and cheered the winners until their throats were sore, and, at the subsequent auction, pretended to bid for horses they could not afford.

When they grew older, and Jamie's father took a mistress, Sarah Black, who lived in Carrickmacross, it was Sean who taught Jamie about girls, and the great mysteries of sex, and it was Sean who first introduced Jamie to the wonders of beer and poteen, for the boy could not understand his father's faithlessness to the memory of his dead mother.

In all things they were as brothers, but although their ages were similar, it was Sean who led and Jamie who followed. They bridged, with the easy bond of youth, the many chasms that their different positions in society created for them, and they nurtured each other in spite of these differences, and drew strength from them. Once Jamie had Maureen crop his hair short, in the peasant-boy manner, the more to identify with his sunshine friend. When he went home, his father whipped him,

and forbade him to leave the house until his hair had grown out, and Jamie kept his hair long after that.

So Jamie grew up with an appreciation of the life and hardships of the mass of the people. His other world of his father's ambition, and of class and privilege, bored Jamie, and made him long to be back with his peasant friends. Yet he could not avoid that other life.

Much of Ballybay was owned by the Leslie family, impoverished minor English aristocracy, who, lacking funds, were happy to accept the sometime friendship and occasional loans of James Jackson, whom otherwise they regarded as a man of 'trade and not of their social quality. For a while they were prepared to

consider the possibility of an acquaintance between James Jackson's children and their own, and invited Jamie and Washington to spend an afternoon with their own children. Dressed in their best and sworn to good behavior by Jugs, they were driven by old Quinn, the hostler, in a fine gig with handsome horses.

Jamie and Washington took a stiffly formal tea with the Leslie boy and girl, attended by their governess, whose manners were as starched as her dress and high collar. Afterward, they were taken outside to play in the formal gardens of the small castle. They strolled politely through the grounds until they came to a fence that bordered a cow pasture. Young Jamie, the devil in him, dared the Leslie girl to run through the pasture with him. She accepted.

The governess, furious, raced after them, calling on her charge to watch her step, but it was too late. The girl slipped on a cow pat and fell to the ground. When Jamie went to help her up, he slipped too, in the same pat. The girl began to cry, and the governess berated Jamie for what he had done. He was suitably contrite at first, but the sight of the primped girl covered in cow dung was too much for him, and he started to laugh.

This infuriated the victim.

"Go away, you bloody Irish ass!" she cried. The governess boxed her ears for her language but not her sentiments, dragged her away, and told Jamie he was a horrid little boy, who was never to come near them again.

Old Quinn drove the boys home, his nose wrinkling at the

smell of cow manure coming from the seat behind him, but his eyes twinkling with delight at the cheek of his young master. Washington was in awe of his slightly older brother, and Jamie could not wait to tell Sean.

That afternoon caused something of a change in Jamie's relationship with old Quinn. Previously, the stable master had regarded him as a bit of a nuisance, a bothersome boy who had to be taught to ride, and whose presence in the stables distracted Quinn from his true passion, and disturbed his precious Thoroughbred mares. Following the incident at the Leslies', Quinn, who detested everything

British except racing stock, took more time with Jamie, and found in him a natural talent for riding.

He encouraged Jamie's interest in horses, and astonished the boy with the breadth of his knowledge. He could recount the bloodline of every horse in his stable, their ages, sires, and dams, back through several generations. He instructed the boy in their care and management, he advised him of the potential of any new colt, and by the time Jamie was a young man, he had acquired much of Quinn's knowledge, as well as his passion. All the animals were divided into separate stables, the racing horses in one, the riding horses in another, and the workhorses in a third, because, Quinn insisted, the bloodlines could not be mixed.

Jamie's father, James, was often away, on business in Belfast or Dublin, but sometimes Jamie was allowed to accompany him to races in which a Jackson horse was entered. Then his father was a different man to him.

Free of the burden of being a parent, free to indulge his love of the track, James Jackson was attentive to his son, and taught him something of the ownership of racehorses, and the special skills that racing required. If his horse won, which his favorite, Crazy Jane, often did, James was expansive and bought his son gifts. If their horse was not placed, father and son traveled home in mutual, depressed silence.

Occasionally, his father would entertain, and the breakfast for the hunt club would be held at the mansion. These social events were used by James to extend and develop his social and business connections with the ruling class, with the Leslies and especially Dacre Hamilton.

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Hamilton was the major English presence in the county of Monaghan, and served as sheriff. He was a strict Protestant, with no sympathy for Catholics. He took pleasure in rigidly enforcing all the penal laws against the peasants, whom

he regarded as illiterate idolaters. These laws, instituted after the British victory at the Battle of the Boyne, were used to keep the defeated Catholics out of money, land, and power.

The laws encouraged religious conversion and informing on neighbors-and even families, for only a Protestant in a Catholic family could inherit the land.

James expected his children to attend these functions, which they did unwillingly, for Dacre Hamilton was not loved by any of them. He had once briefly imprisoned their brother and sister, John and Eleanor, for some youthful high jinks. John had defended a hedge-school teacher against an irate landlord, and Eleanor had announced in public that she thought the religious persecution of the Catholics was obscene. Dacre Hamilton also protested to James Jackson, and warned him to exercise greater control over his children's opinions and actions. James had taken a riding crop to John, and locked Eieanor in her room for three days. It was this that persuaded John to emigrate to America and Eleanor to move to Dublin. The other Jackson children were wary of Hamilton, and while they enjoyed the sport of the hunt, they disliked the overweening sycophancy to England of the hunters. Encouraged by Sean, Jamie began to believe that most of the club would rather be in pursuit of Irish peasants than foxes or hares.

Nothing was more indicative of the social gap that existed between Jamie and Sean than the manner of their formal education. A tutor was engaged for Jamie: Jimmy Hanna, an impoverished young man of good leaming, from Dublin, who had recently graduated from Trinity College and was looking to make his way in an unfair world. The classroom was the music room of the Jackson house, and they would sit together in isolate splendor, the teacher and his only student, and Jamie was introduced to the classical world of Latin and Greek, of mathematics and history. As he got to know his student better, and trusted him more, Jimmy introduced him to the glories of Irish literature. Jamie loved the beautiful words, and the

worlds they evoked of rainwashed fields and white-walled cottages, of lowering

skies and breaking sunlight. Of heroes and rainbows.

With poetry as a foundation, Jimmy gently led his student to Ireland's present troubles, gave him a clear appreciation of the battle that lay ahead to rid their country of foreign rule, and taught him that freedom was the most precious word in any language.

Sean's school was behind a hedge. The British authorities were fearful of education for the peasants. History, presented in the wrong light, could lead to sedition, and many of the hedge-school teachers were deeply involved in the liberation movements. The teachers taught where they could, in ditches and behind hedgerows, with some lucky few having access to a shed or shack. They were paid in kind, with peat for their fires, or food for their stomachs-small stabs of bacon, or some potatoes, a bag of meal, a pound of butter or a few eggs. Textbooks were few, and those the teachers did have they had usually copied themselves, from printed books they could not afford to buy. Often a young man of the village would be posted as lookout, for many landlords kicked teachers off their properties, and burned their precious books, or charged them with sedition.

Sean's classes lasted only two or three hours, and he could go at all only when Maureen had something to give the teacher, but Jamie studied morning and afternoon. His older sister Sara was a frequent visitor to his classroom, for she was smitten by the tutor.

Jimmy Hanna had come to them through a family connection. The Irish Protestants were few in number, and even fewer owed their first allegiance to Ireland rather than England. Jimmy's brother Hugh was a friend of their sister Martha, who was completing her studies in Dublin.

Both brothers were handsome, educated men, dedicated to the Irish cause, and both sisters, Martha and Sara, were headstrong and willful. Lacking parental affection and guidance, they longed for love, and followed the example of their older sister, the firebrand Eleanor, by challenging their father and all he stood for, if only to try.to make him appreciate them more, or at least play some active role in their lives. Their patriotism was genuine,

and deeply felt, and they saw in their own lives the greater cause. Like Ireland, they were unloved by him who governed them and had dominion over them, so they identified with the larger community, and dedicated themselves to its wellbeing, for at core they were deeply lonely. When a handsome young man who shared her convictions rode into Ballybay and into her life, and encouraged her to have faith in herself, Sara fell hopelessly in love. She would sit for hours in the classroom watching him teach, learning from him herself, and about him.

It worked to Jamie's advantage, for sometimes, on a dreary, drizzly afternoon or a pretty spring day, Jimmy, anxious to be alone with Sara, would curtail the lessons, and Sara's eyes would sparkle. She would send Jamie off to old Quinn in the stables, or to Jugs for some food, or to play with his croppy friend Sean. Then she would sit with Jimmy and hold hands with him, or sometimes they would kiss, and the warmth and reassurance of his presence, the strong beliefs that they shared, and the generosity of his nature persuaded Sara that she was loved.

When she found out that Sarah Black had become more than a friend to her father, although less than a wife, Sara was bitterly hurt. She could not understand why her father would not marry the woman, and bring her to his house so she could fulfill some of the functions of mother-or older woman friend at least. In her distress, she turned to Jimmy for comfort, and, lacking any moral conviction or example, she surrendered herself to him.

They took their pleasure secretly, covertly, in places where they thought they would not be discovered, but they were not discreet enough. Jamie, returning to the house one day because Sean was sick, saw them coupling together in the classroom. He did not announce his presence, for he was at puberty himself, and fascinated by the things Sean had told him. He watched Sara and Jimmy for a while, through the slightly open door, but then became embarrassed and excited, and crept away to his bedroom, to caress his own adolescent need.

He could not keep quiet about what he had seen for long, for it gave him some ascendancy over his sister, which was important to a boy of his age.

Sara blushed and flared, and slapped his face for a peeping Tom, and then cried, and swore

him to secrecy. When she had his promise, she giggled, and began to treat him as a young man from then on, and no longer as a boy.

Thus the Jackson children grew up effectively left to their own devices, and found love where they could. They were not unhappy, for each child had developed a keen self-reliance, and each tried to give his brothers and sisters something of what they lacked. These sibling bonds, woven in youth, stayed with them, and were a source of comfort and support to them all their lives, though never constraining.

But Jamie determined to create a family that would supply to his own children what he had never had. His father's house was not his home, merely the house in which he lived.

For home, he had learned from Sean, is where you are loved.

2

Jamie was fourteen when he had his first experience of violence by the soldiers. For years he had known that the local priest, Father Moran, forbidden to practice his religion in public, still tended the spiritual needs of his peasant congregation in a small cave on Crieve Mountain.

Jamie knew very little about the Catholic religion, but was told by his father and other Protestants that it was a pagan cult of cannibalism, venerating a priest in Rome, and worshiping graven images. Its followers believed that in the communion they were eating the actual flesh of Christ. Jamie had never seen the priest, but knew of him from the peasant whisperings. He became a legendary figure in Jamie's mind, a secret, superstitious man of magic, who lived with the

figure in Jamie's mind, a secret, superstitious man of magic, who lived with the leprechauns on the misty mountain, and practiced strange and ancient rituals, spoken in Latin, that were to do with birth, and marriage, and death, and the life to come.

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He was with Sean at the cottage when the messenger came by. The messengers carried poles, to help them vault over hedges and ditches, and brought important news to the villages of Ireland. This messenger, wary of the longer-haired Jamie, whispered to Patrick in Gaelic, which Jamie hardly understood. Patrick spoke to Maureen and Sean, also in Gaelic, and Jamie could feel a sudden excitement among them, and a sense, for the first time in his life, that he was an outsider to them. When he and Sean went fishing the next day, Jamie badgered his friend about the messenger, and eventually Sean swore him to secrecy and told him the news. It was Easter, and Father Moran was going to say a public mass in the village square the following Sunday.

Jamie was thrilled and appalled. The saying of mass was proscribed, and if the soldiers or any English sympathizer knew of it, the priest would be imprisoned. At the same time, Jamie itched to know about the secret religion, and what it was that made its persecutors so angry.

Reluctantly, Sean agreed to take Jamie to the mass, but made him swear, by all he held holy, by his mother's grave, that he would tell no one.

They met at the cottage on Sunday, ate soda bread and cheese, and then Sean walked with Jamie to the village. Maureen and Patrick went on before.

Jamie was not sure what he expected to see, but certainly had not expected what he saw. In the village square, an old man in black was holding a simple cross and chanting in Latin to the fifty or so kneeling villagers assembled there. He saw nothing subversive, nothing pagan, nothing that might destroy the fabric of the society in which he lived, only a deep and simple faith, and an adoration of the cross and what it symbolized.

It was Easter Sunday and Christ was the risen king, he understood from the

Latin words, and his Protestant soul could not argue with that, for it was what he was taught and what he believed. He found the rituals odd but oddly beautiful. He marveled at the true belief of those assembled, and at their stubbornness and bravery for resolutely following a faith that was so viciously circumscribed by the authorities.

Then the soldiers came.

A troop of redcoated British soldiers marched into the

town, their officer on horseback. The officer rode to Father Moran and accused him of sedition. Fury and resentment ran through the congregation, but the priest held up his cross.

"Go peacefully about your ways," he called to his flock. They fell silent, but stayed to watch for the safety of their shepherd. Jamie, standing with Sean, was aware of a deep and awful anger in his friend, and Sean glared at Jamie. -

"Was it you who told?" he whispered furiously. Jamie swore not, but Sean was not convinced.

"You knew," he said. "And someone told."

Father Moran was arrested and tied to the posts of the village well. The old priest was flogged mercilessly in front of the people, and then dragged away. A palpable fury ran through the Crowd as they witnessed the flaying, and they jeered the soldiers, but the time was not right for rebellion. Some few lads threw stones and clumps of earth at the soldiers, but were chased and beaten for it.

As they walked home, Sean kicked the ground in his fury and frustration.

Jamie tried to say something to comfort him, but Sean rounded on him, and asked him if he was proud of his rich, Protestant ruling class now. Jamie protested. He had been horrified by what he had seen, but did not know what they could have done to prevent it.

"We must fight," Sean said. "We must be rid of them."

"We must fight," Sean said. "We must be rid of them."

Jamie could not see how they could win. The soldiers had guns. The peasants had only pitchforks.

"It is enough," Sean insisted. "We are many and they are few, and it is better to die for what you believe in than live in bondage."

He looked at his friend, who was not, at that moment, his friend.

"Would you die for what you believe in?"

Jamie felt guilty, because he was not sure that he would. The violence of the soldiers, and their blatant abuse of their power, had frightened him.

Sean saw the fear and doubt in his eyes. "Living up there in your fine mansion, born with a silver spoon in your mouth, you don't even know what you believe," he said disgustedly, and turned away.

It was true, Jamie thought. He loved Sean and his family,

and Jugs and old Quinn, and his heart bled for their Ireland. He loved his sisters and brothers, and respected his father and what he had achieved.

Above everything, he knew he loved being alive, and shuddered at the prospect of laying down his life for a cause he did not believe could triumph. The temporary souring of his friendship with Sean made him examine his heart, and he was shocked to discover that there was nothing he believed in that was worth his life. And not having such a cause, and lacking his friend, he was lonely, and sought for some passionate faith.

Jamie returned home to be greeted by his father's wrath. James knew his son had attended the mass, because Dacre Hamilton had told him. He knew that a visiting English business friend had been assaulted, on leaving the Jackson mansion, by some peasants as a reprisal for the beating of Father Moran, because Dacre Hamilton had told him. He knew that his standing within his small

Dacre Hamilton had told him. He knew that his standing within his small, privileged community was threatened by the various actions of his children, because Dacre Hamilton had told him.

James Jackson also knew that his business could not survive without the patronage of the British. He didn't need Dacre Hamilton to tell him this; it was the law of the land. There was an embargo on all Irish commerce and trade unless a British agent was involved. If it was decided that James was a Catholic sympathizer, or an Irish collaborationist, the agents would find other sources of supply for linen, and James could not sell his except on the local market, where the prices were meaningless.

All because of his foolish children.

He was hurt and angry. He had tried to give his offspring every advantage, and, one by one, they had rejected him, and all he had done for them.

"All this could be yours," he shouted at Jamie, waving his hand at the estate, pointing to the mill. "But only if you have the good sense to protect it!"

Obviously, the boy had no sense, and was in sore need of discipline. For reasons that were as much political as practical, James did what he had done for each of his other children. He enrolled Jamie in a school in Dublin, and wrote to his brother Henry asking if Jamie might board with him there.

All the Jackson children had boarded with Uncle Henry when they went to school in Dublin. He was all the things their father was not-a warmhearted and generous man, and dedicated to Ireland. He had a fine house in the best part of the city, but was living on yesterday's income.

He owned an ironworks that had been successful, but the more he announced his sentiments against the British, the more his business declined. He still had loyal clients, but none of the large orders from the British Commissioner or the military came his way anymore. His financial fate was exactly what James

Jackson was trying so desperately to avoid.

The prospect of Dublin thrilled Jamie. He had never been there, but knew from his sisters, when they came home to visit, that it was a vibrant and exciting city, full of adventure and teeming life. He was sad to leave Washington and Jugs and old Quinn, and said many fond farewells to them, and assured Jugs he would change his linen frequently, and eat well, and not get into trouble. On his last day in Ballybay, he walked to Maureen's cottage, and said his goodbyes to her and to Patrick, and thanked them for their many kindnesses to him.

Then he turned to Scan, whom he had hardly seen since their argument. To his surprise, Sean had tears in his eyes, and embraced Jamie, and wished him well, and Jamie clung to his friend, and felt, for the first time, that he was leaving home.

The following morning, when Jamie set off in the trap with Quinn, on his new adventure, Sean was waiting at the gate, and rode with them to Carrickmacross. He told Jamie it was as well he was leaving. The country was in turmoil, and the long-promised battle was looming. It was better that Jamie be out of it, comparatively safe, in the big city. At Carrickmacross, Sean jumped out of the trap, shook hands with Jamie, said a gruff goodbye, and wandered away into the crowd.

Sean's cautionary farewell distressed Jamie, for he realized that his friend did not think him brave. But he was brave, and he would prove it, and make Sean proud of him.

He loved Dublin. It was everything his sisters, especially Eleanor, had promised him it would be. He loved the elegance and graciousness of Merrion Square, where his uncle Henry lived, and he was shocked by The Liberties, where the tattered

poor squatted in mansions that had once been the homes of the rich. He strolled

poor squatted in mansions that had once been the homes of the rich. He strolled on the banks of the meandering fiver, the Liffey, and stood in awe before the imposing Dublin Castle, the grandest he had ever seen. He thrilled to ride with his uncle through the grinding slums of Whitechapel, and wept at the poverty he saw there, and did not know that his uncle was carefully appraising his reactions. His ears were enchanted by the strange music of the city, the perpetual noise, out of which came chants that he began to recognize, the street vendors announcing their wares, the tinkers and apple sellers, the muffin inen and costermongers and herring women.

He loved the sense of unity that prevailed among the governed Irish, and he shared the general hatred of the governing British. His blood boiled when he saw the redcoated soldiers marching through the streets, pushing the poor and the beggars out of their way, and arresting or beating any who offended them, no matter how slight the cause. His mind raced at the conversations in his uncle's house, at the dinner parties, where he was allowed to sit and talk with the older guests, and was included in their conversations. His nerves tingled at the sense of revolution and rebellion that was the undercurrent of all their talk, however guarded they might be in front of him.

He came to love and respect Eleanor, whom he had never known well. The red-haired passionate young woman and her wealthy, deeply committed husband, Oliver Bond, were frequent visitors to his uncle's house, and brought with them a sense of danger and glamour and excitement, It was Eleanor who questioned James about his political beliefs, for she had heard something of his adventures with Sean, in Ballybay, and it was she who cautioned him.

"I must warn you to keep in strictest confidence whatever you see and hear in this house," she said, when they were alone together. I

Jamie, in awe of his sister, swore that he could be trusted with any secret, and told her how he had kept to himself the information that Father Moran would say mass. Eleanor nodded, and seemed satisfied, and gave him books to read by Rousseau and Thomas Paine.

The books introduced him to concepts of democracy, and of the equality of all men, and he began to sympathize with

the plight of the poor as he had sympathized with the peasants. He cheered as lustily as any when Lord Edward Fitzgerald and his beautiful wife, Lady Pamela, rode by in their carriage.

Lord Edward was now the commander of the revolutionary forces. The British knew this, but were loath to touch him, because of his title and position, and because he had not yet given them any great cause. But the very sight of him offended them, just as it enthused the masses, for he wore simple clothes, his hair was close-cropped in the peasant style, and his lovely wife was dressed in peasant linen with a muslin apron.

With a young man's zeal, Jamie had mistaken the function of revolution; he saw virtue in poverty and felt guilty because he was not poor. The appalling contrast between the desperate masses and the few rich was so overwhelming that he thought he had found the cause he had been looking for. Again, it was Eleanor who instructed him.

"It is not just for the poor and the peasants," she told him. "it is for all of us. It is for Ireland. When we are free of foreign domination, when we rule ourselves, then we can address the problems of the masses."

Jamie knew he was teetering on the very edge of tumultuous times, and longed to be closer to the center, although he was, by his relationships, nearer than many. He spoke to his uncle Henry, and begged to be allowed to join his association.

"It is not altogether your youth," Uncle Henry said, shaking his head slightly. "It is that you are so new to the idea."

But Henry saw the potential of the young man, and did not dash his hopes entirely.

"But I would say you are a fair possibility," he said, and smiled.

Soon after Christmas, Oliver Bond and Eleanor came late at night to Henry's house, and whispered the depressing news. A great French fleet, led by Wolfe Tone, had sailed into Bantry Bay to invade Ireland and begin the conquest of the British, but had been forced back by foul weather.

Oliver correctly predicted the bloodbath that was to come, but looked to the future. They would strive for the revolution, and they would succeed, but without French help. The disappointed nationalists retired and licked their dashed hopes for

a while, but the violence of the British reprisals against the people stirred them, and the coming spring brought them renewed vigor, renewed hope, and renewed determination. But thev needed more men.

o on a cold and rainy April night, Jamie went with his uncle Henry to a guarded garret in the slums of Whitechapel and was admitted to the association of United Irishmen, and swore his solemn oath. Jamie's youthful soul thrilled to this new world of whispered plots and plans and secret passwords, and the inclusion in the company of men.

That summer, Jamie went home to Ballybay for Sara's wedding to Jimmy Hanna, who was now tutoring Washington. Jamie was a hero to Washington as Sean was a hero to Jamie, and Washington reveled in his company. His father was surprisingly affable, perhaps because, with most of his children living in Dublin or America, his position was more secure. Jugs wept, and overfed Jamie, convinced he had lost weight, when he was merely growing taller. Quinn shared a welcoming mug of poteen with him, and Sean welcomed him as if there had never been a difference between them. Sean was aware of some change in Jamie, and obviously approved of it, but did not question him closely, nor could Jamie have told him of his new political associations, because of the binding secrecy of his oath. But now it was summer and they were young men, anxious to test their burgeoning manhood and growing muscles, and they passed a pleasant season, fishing, and boxing and wrestling, and getting into young men's trouble.

Jamie gave his virginity to a buxom peasant girl, who had long had Sean's, under a hayrick, drunk on cider.

Of all the good summers of Jamie's life, this was golden, for underlying their pastoral idleness was the growing whisper of rebellion.

Still the call to arms did not come, and, back in Dublin, Jamie chafed at the lack of activity. They seemed to be doing nothing, getting nowhere, and the British were still riding roughshod over the Irish community. He poured out his frustrations to Eleanor, and she listened, and nodded her head gravely.

"When?" he cried, for if anyone knew, it was Eleanor.

"When Ivers or Carlow is come," she told him, and he could see the twinkle in her eyes.

It was the whispered password that got them into their meetings: "Is lvers or Carlow come?" The two names were changed frequently, for fear of traitors, but the substance remained the same, and one day, when the given answer would be yes, Ivers or Carlow is come, the revolution would begin.

Ivers, or Carlow, came the following March, but not in a way that any of them expected or wanted. Rioting by peasants farther to the south, in County Wexford, persuaded the British that it was time to destroy the leadership of the United Irishmen. A traitor came to them, Thomas Reynolds, a silk merchant, who had been in Paris during the Terror, and was appalled by the mob rule. After the debacle of Wolfe Tone and the French fleet, he was persuaded by his wife that perhaps they should reconsider their commitment to the Irish cause. Both were social climbers, both realized what patronage from the British could do for them, and as the possibility of Irish victory receded in their minds, Reynolds turned his coat to the British.

Oliver Bond himself opened the door to the three burly men whose faces he did not recognize.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

What do you want?" he demanded.

"Is Ivers or Carlow come?" the first man said, smiling. It was the proper password, but still Oiiver was confused, and hesitated a fraction too long. The men burst into his house, and arrested all who were gathered there. United Irish guards keeping watch on the house from the Brazenhead Inn, across the street, were astonished to see the reinforcing British troops that now arrived, and, knowing the game was lost, some scattered into the night to wam the others. Those remaining saw Lord Fitzgerald's coach arriving, and rushed to head him off. He needed no second bidding but whipped his horses, and drove, hard as he could, toward Whitechapel.

The troops gave chase, but as they came to the slums, word spread like wildfire, and the poor people thronged into the streets behind Lord Edward's carriage, and blocked the passage of his pursuers.

A lookout got to Henry's house just before the soldiers, and raised the alarm. For himself, Henry saw no point in flight, but worried for his nephew. He gave Jamie a little money, and

told him to get to Ballybay, where he would be safe. Jamie was reluctant. He had a young man's need to prove himself.

"This is just a skirmish, not the battle," Uncle Henry urged him. "You are more useful to us free than in prison. Go free and fight."

He pushed Jamie out of the back door, and returned to the hallway, where the -soldiers were already battering their way inside.

Jamie crept through the back alleys and lanes to the slums, where he used the password to find friends. He was sheltered for the night, and in the morning they guided him to the outskirts of the city. They cropped his hair and put him in peasant clothes, and found a friendly farmer, who hid him in his cart and took him to his home county. Along the way they heard the news.

The conditions of martial law were to be made stricter, harsher. British troops would now be dispersed throughout Ireland, and free-quartered wherever they chose. It was Crown-ordered that the association of United Irishmen be crushed by whatever means necessary, and many of the leaders were now in Newgate Prison, following the arrests in Dublin. The Sheares brothers and Oliver Bond. Uncle Henry, although not a ringleader, was with them. Lord Fitzgerald, who had not been caught, was in hiding somewhere in the city, and Lady Pamela. Eleanor had not been arrested, as women were not considered dangerous.

At Rockfield, Jamie bade farewell to his farmer friend, and made his way on foot, under cover of night, to Carrickmacross and thence Ballybay. He avoided the towns,and villages, slept in the hedgerows, and used the money his uncle had given him to buy food at peasant cottages.

On a moonlit evening, he reached his father's house, and saw half a dozen British soldiers gathered around a campfire on the front lawn. He sneaked through the grounds, made his way to the stables, and scraped his nails on old Quinn's door. The hostler, rubbing sleep from his eyes, was immediately awake when he saw Jamie. He dragged the boy inside, shushed him to silence, and closed and barred the door.

"The sodyers are after ye," he said. He hid Jamie under the bed, and went to find Jugs. She came to him in dead of

night, and held him to her, and wept for him. The soldiers had come for him, and were waiting in case he should come home. His father was practically a prisoner in his own house, a suspect despite his past record because of Henry and Eleanor, and their known association with the United Irishmen. Jamie's membership was also known, and, despite his youth, a warrant was out for his arrest, as brother-in-law to the traitor Oliver Bond, and nephew to Henry Jackson. Jugs had a message from his father, given in case he should come home.

"Don't come here, and I may yet be able to get us out of this."

Jamie was touched, for these were almost the kindest words he had ever had

from his father. But he despaired. He could not stay in his father's house, and had nowhere else to go. Jugs came to his rescue again. Quinn created a distraction with a horse, causing it to bolt in its paddock, and the soldiers mocked and jeered the old man's apparently feeble efforts to calm it down. Jugs led Jamie through the night and took him to a small, abandoned barn on a nearby property, Sean was there, in hiding from the soldiers.

Jamie smiled in relief when he saw his old friend, and Sean was astonished at the muddy, peasant-clad, crop-haired young man who stood before him.

"Is Ivers or Carlow come'?" Jamie whispered with a grin, and Sean grinned too, and hugged Jamie hard.

"Yes," Sean said. "He is come."

3

They talked until dawn, and made their plans. They were not safe in Ballybay, and they needed to fight, for they were young, and their blood ran hot for their cause, and they were men of Ireland, and their country was bleeding. Sean had heard, as Jamie before him, of the riots to the south, in County Wexford, and they looked at each other, and nodded their

heads, and knew, without voicing it, where they would go.

Maureen and Jugs made food for them, and wept in their hearts, but would not show their tears to their sons, for they were women of Ireland. Old Quinn gave them two nags from the stables, workhorses too old to work, who would otherwise have been sent to the knacker's yard, and justified it, not as stealing, but as a contribution to his young master's need.

Under cover of night, Washington and Sara stole to the bam to greet their

brother and wish him Godspeed.

There was no moon to guide them south, but they knew the way, for they knew all the byways of their county, which was their own, their native land. Maureen and Jugs waved them on their journey, and took comfort from each other, and wept, for that was the way of it.

And their country was bleeding. On the morning of the second day, they saw the bayoneted corpses hanging from trees, and then more dead, peasants shot in a field. They came upon a father, wounded himself, carrying his dead son.

“Bastards wiped ‘em out,” he gasped to no one, or to anyone who might hear his piteous rage. “Just boys, armed with sticks, all gone, gone.”

He staggered on with his awful burden, to take his dead son home to his mother, who would weep for her lost boy, her only son.

A little farther down the road they saw the bodies of the boys, similar in age to themselves, white-hooded heads almost severed from their shoulders, and left for carrion.

They aged, not in years, on their short journey south, but with experience of the world, and a new kind of passion engulfed them, the need for revenge.

As they rode into the county of Wexford, they stopped in taverns in all the villages they passed through, listening for rumors of rebellion, but the fight they were looking for, the war that they needed, eluded them, until they came to Boulavogue. They rode toward the town and saw a platoon of redcoated soldiers marching in that same direction. They looked at each other and thrilled, and spurred their horses.

In Boulavogue, the people were gathered in the town square, listening to two priests, brothers, who held carved wooden crosses and a paper.

Father John Murphy and Father Michael Murphy might have been twins, but were not. Dedicated to the welfare of their parishioners, they had spent their lives as priests in search of peace, practiced their religion covertly, and bridged, when they could, the awful gap between the rulers and the ruled. The local British Commissioner knew of their existence, but the brothers were useful to him, as mediators between himself and the people, and on many occasions the priests had been able to calm angry crowds, and bring order and reason to a disordered world. The riots and the subsequent bloodshed in the county had shocked the Commissioner, and he believed that the actions of the military were fomenting rebellion rather than suppressing it. He had suggested to the brother priests that if all the citizens signed a petition of loyalty to the Crown, Boulavogue would be left in peace.

Father John and Father Michael stood before their flock now, and urged them to sign the petition, for they had seen the disastrous aftermath of earlier riots, and could not believe that any good could come from the use of force, if only because the soldiers, although fewer in number, were~ superbly trained and an-ned. The priests were peaceful men, who believed that there was nothing that a fight could achieve that a smile could not, except blood and death and anguish.

Jamie and Sean resisted the powerful simple urgings of the priests. This was no place for them, and it disgusted them to see that several of the peasants had already stepped forward and made their mark on the petition.

As they were about to leave, they saw a messenger come gasping into the town. He shouted out his news. The Commissioner had been replaced; martial law prevailed. At nearby Dunvin, twenty Catholic peasants had been mercilessly shot for refusing to denounce their religion. At Camew, twice that number had died.

Father Michael stared at the man, dumbstruck with pity and horror, and crossed himself, and murmured prayers for the souls of the dead. His brother, Father John, lifted the parchment that was the petition high in the air, and tore it to shreds, to the silent appreciation and deep-rooted fear of the people.

Then they saw the flames, and the redcoats.

The church at Boulavogue had been boarded up for years, unused by the

clergy since the religion was proscribed. Father

John and Father Michael held their services in barns, or milking sheds, or ditches, believing that the Holy Spirit was with them wherever any number, no matter how few, were gathered together. But the church building, abandoned and rotting, had been a powerful symbol for the community, and they lived in the hope that one day the edict against their religion would be repealed, and they could take down the boards, and open the church, and let the sweet light of day come flooding in.

Now it was burning, torched by the soldiers, who were marching toward them. There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that a fate similar to that of their cousins in Dunvin and Carnew awaited them unless they renounced their religion, and this they would not do, They would fight and die if necessary, and preferred this to abandoning their God.

To everyone’s surprise, it was Father John who led the charge. The sight of his beloved church in flames, the news of the death of so many innocents who had done nothing more than worship God in their own way, and defended that right to worship to the death, enraged the gentle priest. With a cry that came from the very pit of his soul, he grabbed a stout staff from a man standing near, and ran screaming at the soldiers.

Where Father John went, Father Michael went, and where the priests went, the flock followed. All the men in the square grabbed whatever weapons came to hand, pitchforks and sticks, spades and cart whips, and followed the priests into the fray.

Sean looked at Jamie in triumph, and both cried out in exhilaration, Sean in Gaelic and Jamie in English.

“Erin go bragh!”

“Ireland forever!”

They leaped from their horses and ran to the thick of the fight, punching,

kicking, wresting guns from soldiers. The women of the town stood and cheered their men to battle.

The soldiers were surprised by the speed and ferocity of the attack, and its very unlikeliness, and for the first few minutes, the peasants had the advantage. But, better trained and better armed, the troops recovered their wits, and fought back. In hand-to-hand combat, the peasant band slowly retreated toward the square.

A man fell to the ground, his head cracked open by the butt of a musket.

His wife, who had been praying for him, ran to him, and saw that he could not live, or perhaps was already dead. Years of repression and anger, years of hardship, years of brutality by the soldiers now welled up in her. A banshee cry came from her, and she threw herself at the soldier who she thought had killed her man, kicking and screaming, tearing out his hair, gouging at his eyes.

It was a clarion call to the other women. The primal scream that they heard from the now widowed woman woke the animal in all of them. Like their men before them, they grabbed anything they could find to use as weapons-pots and pans, sticks and stones, or just their bare hands-and they descended on the soldiers like lions in defense of their lair.

The soldiers were astounded. They were trained to fight men, other soldiers, in fon-nal ranks of order. They were trained to kick and crucify docile peasants. They were trained to whip and mutilate untrained youths. But they were not trained to face a screaming, caterwauling mob Of rampant women out for blood.

It was a rout, and the soldiers fled, to the cheers and jeers of the people. They fled to regroup, and nurse their wounds, and be harangued by their officers for letting a pack of women get the better of them.

Most of them lived to fight another day, and would never underestimate the ferocity of females again.

Not all of them lived. One soldier’s neck was broken. Another had a pitchfork through his heart. Five peasants were dead.

When the soldiers where gone, the cheering died to nothing. The women, as if appalled by the forces that had been unleashed from inside them, became docile, and wept for the dead, and for themselves. Their husbands and sons came to comfort them, and stood with them, thrilled but apprehensive, for they feared what the soldiers would do in retaliation.

The brother priests stared at one another, and then each looked at his bloody hands. They whispered together, and began to make plans, for they had entered, or been dragged into, a strange and frightening new world, but they knew there was no going back.

Jamie sat on the ground and tended his bloody nose and a

gash on his arrn, while Sean sat beside him, and put a wet cloth to his blackening eye, and looked at the scratches on his arms and legs. It had been a good fight, but they felt no sense of jubilation. It was only a skirmish, and the real battle was yet to come.

The messenger ran. He had seen the fight and bashed a few British heads with his long, thick pole, and felt a swingeing surge of excitement, for this was something that was worth the telling, and it was his alone to tell.

He raced from the town, and pole-vaulted ditches and hedges with breathless, careless speed, to the villages nearby and gasped his news.

Other messengers took up the cry, and soon the county rang with the glad tidings, that a small group of unarmed peasants, led by two priests, had defeated the might of Britain.

They left their homes, taking with them what weapons they had, and came in a trickle at first, and then a flood, to Gorey Hill, not far from Boulavogue, where the fathers, Michael and John, had made their camp.

Within two days their number was a thousand, and within a week, three times that.

But on that first night they were only a dozen, the priests and Jamie and Sean, and eight more, young men eager for battle. The soldiers could have struck them down with ease, if they had found them, but they did not bother.

They contented themselves with setting fire to a score of peasant cottages, as vengeance for their defeat. Several of the women who had fought, and a few who had not, were raped.

Jamie and Sean had cast their lot with the priests because there seemed no better place to be. The fathers had thanked them, and accepted, unwillingly, their congratulations. Father John looked at his hands again.

"With my own hands I choked a man almost to death," Father John said. "I am in fear for my mortal soul."

"But he didn't die," Jamie said, puzzled by the priest's grief.

"No." Father John nodded, but mournfully. "But others will, and I believe that I will do some of that killing."

He looked at his hands again, as if continually astounded by what they had done. "I have devoted my life to the healing

grace of God, but it seems He has other plans for me."

Sean took charge, for the priests were not practical men of war.

"They will come again," he said. "We had best find a hiding place."

"Yes," Father Michael agreed. "Are you with us?"

He was only offering shelter, but he had the first two recruits of his army. The

priests led Jamie and Sean to Gorey Hill, avoiding the soldiers' camps, and to a small shack that they used when the town was unsafe for them. As the four men wended through the dewsoft evening, other young men joined them, and made camp on the hill, and, safe in the night, celebrated, at last, their victory. Some had beer, which they had stolen and shared, and food given them by their families, for all understood that it was only the beginning. But it was something. After years of servility, it was a start on a long road to freedom.

The little group of unarmed, unlikely soldiers who had priests as their generals sat around the campfire, as soldiers do, after battle, and recounted the stories of their day and their fight. They relived every moment of the small battle, and exaggerated their roles in it, and their own valor, and laughed with love at the reckless women who had probably saved their lives, although none would admit that.

Jamie had never known such a sense of companionship and, sitting in Sean's company, felt that he had proved his bravery to the world, and, most important, to his friend. At that moment, he wanted no other life than this, to do daring, foolish things in a great cause, in the company of likeminded fellows, and to sit with them afterward and revel in the memory of it.

Then they saw fires, and stood and looked at the burning cottages around Boulavogue, and knew what the soldiers had done.

" Damned British Protties!" a young man said, tears in his eyes. His name was Liam and his home was in flames.

Jamie was silent for a moment, but had to tell them, whatever the consequences might be.

"I am not Catholic," fie said.

There was an awful silence, and then Liam, who had damned the British Protestants, damned him too, and spat at him.

“Then go to your heretic mates,” Liam cried, ready, at that moment, to kill Jamie.

Jamie knew it was a test, and the moment was his. Others might defend him. He had to defend himself.

“I did not think to fight with God,” Jamie said softly. “I thought our cause was Ireland.”

The moment passed. Liam leashed his anger, and looked away. Father John made a joke, which voiced what most of them felt.

“It doesn’t matter,” he said, “if he’s a good Catholic, or a wretched, fornicating Protestant-he is a good Irishman.”

They laughed to break the tension, but Sean did not. Proud of Jamie, he said something simpler, and, to Jamie, so much more important. He stared at Liam.

“He is more,” he said. “He is my friend.”

It was said quietly, just as it was, a simple statement, but it communicated to Liam and to them all the sure and certain conviction that anyone who challenged Jamie also challenged Sean.

They lay side by side, on the soft Irish grass, under blankets the women had brought them, and stared at the stars.

“It was a good day,” Sean whispered, and turned his head to sleep.

“It was a good day,” Jamie whispered. He stared at the moon and shivered for his life.

It had been the most wonderful day of his life. The cause was just and the fight was good. But he had discovered a terrible secret within him.

He did not want to die, because living was infinitely precious to him.

4

For ten days they camped on Gorey Hill until they were three thousand strong. The volunteers brought hope and conviction, and a crusading dedication to their holy cause. All had weapons, pikes and pitchforks; some had horses and a few others guns. They sustained themselves with faith and ancient battle songs.

Very few brought any food.

"God will provide," Father Michael told them, but there was little to eat, and in private the priests prayed for manna from heaven, or a miracle of loaves and fishes.

Jamie was in despair. Cursed with a rational mind, with every increase in their swelling numbers, he felt his belief in their ultimate victory diminish. He could not make anyone else understand the proportions of the coming disaster.

"It is pointless, we cannot feed them!" he whispered angrily to Sean, who shrugged.

"They are starving anyway, and prefer to fight," Sean said, irritated by his friend's practicality, for it dampened his own optimism.

Before them, on the plain, the British assembled a formidable army.

Although few in number, less than a thousand, the Ancient Britains had a fiercesome reputation as a ruthlessly successful fighting unit. Their very name carried with it the frightening ferocity of their ancestors, naked savages painted blue, whose primitive religion called on the sun itself as their ally, and whose battle skills had been honed against the unconquerable forces of Rome. Eventually, they believed, they had conquered those invincible legions, and driven them from their shores, and the noblest days of their history came to them–Arthur, and his heroic knights, whose quest was holy-and even if the legends of that history were not true,

they were believed. They were ruled by formidable monarchs, 'whose achievements propelled and nourished them, and they had conquered, on land and at sea, half the known world. It was this unshakable faith in their own invincibility that had given them an empire the like of which the world had never seen, and earned their country the title "Great." A bunch of rowdy Irish peasants were nothing to them.

The flawless order and discipline of the redcoated army arrayed before them struck fear in the Irish hearts, and hunger brought dissension to the ranks. They were not afraid to die for their cause, but they would rather die in battle than suffer the slow death of starvation. Their generals, however, the priests, seemed reluctant to fight.

Yet fight they must, and perhaps succeed, for if they did not fight they could not win.

It was a warm night, and a fine, soft rain was falling. Sean came to Jamie, who was lying against a tree, trying to sleep. His clothes were wet, his blanket was soaked, and he had not eaten anything other than some oatmeal for days. But Sean had a smile on his face.

"It is tomorrow," he whispered. The words hardly gladdened Jamie's miserable heart, and he tried to come to terms with the fact that tomorrow he might die.

"If I should die," Sean said softly, "and you should live, do your old friend one last favor."

"Anything," Jamie answered.

"Bury me decent, in some quiet place," Sean said.

Jamie did not react for a moment, for Sean's simple acceptance of his possible fate disturbed him. Nor was he puzzled that he did not ask the same of Sean, for

he was determined not to die.

“Swear it to me,” Sean insisted.

Jamie swore his vow, which seemed to satisfy Sean. They lapsed into silence for a while, each man considering the morrow.

“Are you scared?” Jamie asked him, when he found the courage to voice his own fear.

“Oh, I expect so,” Sean laughed. “But anything’s better than living as we have.”

He stared at the drizzling rain and was glad of it, for the

resulting mud would hamper the formally uniformed British, and give the peasants some small advantage. They were used to mud; it was the stuff of their lives. They built their houses from it, and burned it to warm them, and its clover fed their cows. He looked at Jamie, and saw, not for the first time, fear in his friend’s eyes. He laughed, put his arm round his friend, and took a small flask of poteen from his pocket.

“And it’s better than being bored to death,” he said. He held up the flask.

“Erin go bragh,” he whispered, excitement in his eyes, for he had been chafing for action. He passed the flask to Jamie.

“Ireland forever,” Jamie agreed, and drank deep of the harsh liquor, and felt better as the warm fire raced through his body, and calmed his raging fear.

They attacked at dawn, hoping for the benefit of surprise, but the Ancient Britains were ready. They had been trained on the battlefields of India and America, and always stood to just before dawn, for that, experience had taught them, was when savages attacked.

The mud was not the peasants' ally because they had to run through it, down the hill, and slipped and slid toward the waiting muskets of the British, who stood in formal ranks, picking them off as they presented themselves. Jamie believed it must be a rout. They could not possibly win. The sound of gunshots and the screaming of wounded and dying men deafened him; the riotous energy, the flashing of colors, and the sight of spurting blood almost blinded him. He saw the standard-bearer shot from his horse, and all hope deserted him.

He saw Father Michael caught in the dichotomy of priest and soldier. As men died, his faith asserted itself, and he ran to give them the last rites, which were more important for their immortal souls than any earthly victory. He had hardly begun to say the precious words of redemption when a bullet blasted into his heart and he fell to the ground to die beside his brothers, and went unsung and unshepherded to heaven.

Still the peasants charged, for they could not go back, only forward.

Sean, riding by on his horse, saw the tattered rebel flag, green with a golden harp, trampled in the mud. Fury invaded him, and reckless abandon.

He snatched up the glo-

rious banner, waved it defiantly at the redcoats, and galloped to his gunfire death screaming, "Erin go bragh!"

As in an awful dream, Jamie saw Sean reach down from his horse, gather up the flag, and gallop toward the British lines. Then he saw something else, and it was something he envied all of his days. The vision of Sean riding to certain death was so heroic in his mind that Jamie stared at him in wonder, and thought his friend triumphant.

He saw Sean fall from his horse, and raced to him. He jumped down and gathered his friend in his arms. Blood was pumping from Sean's chest, and gurgling up through his mouth. and his face was contorted in pain. Jamie held

Sean to him, crying on him to live, but knew he could not.

Then Sean looked at him, and a sweet smile suffused his face, for behind Jamie he saw a pure, golden light, brighter than any sun, that warmed his soul, and then there were all the dazzling colors of a rainbow, and a deep and abiding sense of peace swept over him.

Jamie knew nothing of this. The futile battle raged around him, unseen and unheard by him, because all he saw was that sweet smile on Sean's face, and then the body relaxed in his arms, and Sean was gone from him.

But Jamie could never define, with any certainty, the moment of his going. He clutched his friend to him and screamed his name, but Sean could not hear him.

He scrambled to his feet, Sean's body in his arms, and staggered through the blood and the mud and gunfire and the bodies to find some quiet place to fulfill his promise to his friend.

He could not escape the deafening roar of the battle, but the place he found would be quiet enough, he knew, tomorrow, when the soldiers were gone. There was a large oak tree by a little brook, and Jamie set Sean down, and waited to gather his strength, to dig, with his bare hands, some form of grave.

Soldiers found him, far from the battleground, and were puzzled by him.

A crop-haired lad, with blood all over his rough clothes but otherwise unharmed, sitting beside the body of another and keening for what he had lost, he did not have the manner or bearing of a peasant. They surrounded him, guns drawn, and dragged him to his feet, punching him a few times.

They demanded his name, and when he told them, his accent did not have a thick brogue. Thinking him a possible ringleader, they did not kill him there, as they might have done, and had done to others, but took him away, to be questioned by their officers.

Jamie stared at them with vacant eyes, but when they kicked the body of Sean into the brook, his anger raged, for he knew he had broken a most solemn vow. With a furious cry, he launched himself at his captors, who laughed, and hit him on the head with a musket butt. He fell to the ground, but the blow, although painful, had not been hard enough, and he was conscious of all that they did to him as they dragged him away to whatever his fate might be.

What Jamie did not know was that the British spared him because the Irish had won. Father John had led a foolhardy charge to the British artillery, had taken it, and turned it on the astounded Ancient Britains. The soldiers who found him were looking for stragglers or runaways who might give information about the Irish numbers and intentions.

The officers of the Ancient Britains knew his name, He was on a list of wanted men, because of his family connection to the traitor Oliver Bond.

They marched him to Dublin and delivered him to Newgate Prison, to be hanged, or to rot with his fellows for his treachery.

Jamie felt none of their wrath and was insensible to their scorn.

Battered and bruised by his captors, he walked in chains to Dublin, lost in a limbo of present grief and the expectation of coming execution. As they marched him through the towns and villages, the people lined the roadway, but not to cheer him or jeer the soldiers, for he was only another victim of their revolution, and the soldiers were the victors.

Father John had won the battle of Gorey Hill, but the war was being lost.

They took him to the forbidding prison and released him from his manacles. There was no need of them here, because escape was impossible.

His new guards, rougher than any soldier, kicked him below, and locked him in a small, dark cell.

Alone in a dank and musty cell, and without any light, Jamie felt his way along the wall and found a bunk where he lay down and stared at the blackness that engulfed him.

5

Newgate Prison was a hellish place, but no worse than Jamie's imaginings, and perhaps somewhat better. In the moming they let him out of his cell, to empty his bucket and wash his face, as best he could, at the communal well in the yard. Bread and oatmeal were the only foods his captors supplied, but many prisoners had plentiful nourishment, provided by relatives on the outside, or bought with bribes to the venal guards. They ate and spent their days in the great hall of the prison, and Jamie found several he knew there, United Irishmen, and many acquaintances. They cheered him, as a new arrival, and were kind to him, and those with food shared some with him, and begged for news of the outside world.

Then he heard a familiar voice.

"Jamie? Is it you?"

He turned and saw his uncle Henry, pate, thin, and scruffy, but with a welcome smile and open arms. The sight of the loved and loving man broke the dam of Jamie's reserve. He went to his uncle and wept, for the first time since Sean's death, and poured out his distress. Henry was gentle with him. He sat Jamie down and listened to his sad story, and said nothing of his own.

He tried to find words of solace, but he had no good news for his nephew.

Jamie's small war at Gorey Hill was a tiny fragment of the larger whole.

In one battle, thirty thousand Catholic rebels had died, for the loss of only two thousand British. Father John was dead: caught, imprisoned, and hanged. Wolfe Tone was dead. Caught after a futile landing with a token French force in the south, he had been imprisoned and condemned to death, and had slashed his neck with a penknife smuggled in by a friend. The Sheares brothers had been hanged. Oliver Bond was condemned to a similar fate.

Lord Edward Fitzgerald had lost his reason. Captured when sick in a tiny garret, he was beaten about the head by arresting soldiers, and his brain was damaged. Unable to comprehend or accept the failure of their enterprise, or the coming execution, not only of himself but of so many he held dear, his mind had wandered into happier pastures, from which no doctor could reclaim him. The rebellion was a failure. The noble cause for which they'had fought lay about them in ruins.

Jamie listened to the litany of woe in silence, and when his uncle was done, he asked the question that dominated his thinking.

"What will happen to me?"

Then he corrected himself.

"What will happen to us, I mean?"

Henry nodded again, but did not smile. Most men's thoughts were, seltish when faced with the prospect of their possible demise, and it was' the question that every prisoner asked when first delivered to the place of his captivity. There was a similar question that all condemned men asked at some point before their coming execution: "Will it hurt?"

"They might hang us; they say they will," he said, with a cheerfulness that surprised Jamie. "But then again, they haven't yet, and while there's life, there's hope."

It was an old clich6, but clich6s often brought comfort to hopeless men, and he had no better words to say. Jamie did not believe him then, but the simple, reassuring presence of his uncle made his burden somewhat easier to bear. Over the weeks, he was questioned, sometimes with brutal force, about what he knew, but it didn't matter if he gave his interrogators the names of subversives, for all

those he knew were already behind bars. As the months wore on and no hint was given of a trial, Jamie relaxed, and almost began to enjoy the rough companionship of prison life.

They were taken out into the prison yard one day, and lined in ranks.

Nothing was said to them, no reason was given for this change in the daily pattern of their lives, and several believed they were to be shot, or hanged, although there was no gallows. They were kept at attention for half an hour, and any man who spoke or asked a question was hit with a truncheon.

A big metal door on the opposite side of the yard scraped

open, and two guards came through, with another man between them. It was Lord Edward Fitzgerald, now a babbling idiot. His hair was wild and unkempt, his eyes were glassy. Spittle dribbled from his chin. They paraded him past his fellows, so that all could see the degradation of the man who had been their leader. Nothing was said, nothing was spoken, except by Lord Edward, who chattered to himself throughout, in a language no one but he understood. He did not recognize any of those who had been his brothers-in-arms.

They took him back to his cell, left the assembled men in the yard for another half hour, then ordered them back inside.

Jamie saw Eleanor once, on a high walkway, taking food to her husband's cell, for he was a condemned man, and kept apart from the others. Eleanor saw Henry and waved at him, and then Jamie, and a smile lighted her face.

She called words of encouragement, and threw some food from her basket to him. Jamie found it hard to imagine that she could be so caring for him and others, and so cheerful of manner, when Oliver was to die.

Eleanor's grief at her husband's conviction was real and deeply felt, but she saw no point in dwelling on it, especially with him, who was already keenly enough aware of what lay in store. She tried to make his final days on earth as bounteous

aware of what lay in store. She tried to make his final days on earth as bounteous as possible, kept him well supplied with good food and the gossip of the city, and liquor when she could, and talked of his coming execution only when he raised the subject. She took advantage of the penal laws to arrange a party for him, some few days before his appointed date with the hangman, for she thought he would enjoy being with all his old friends. She bribed the guards, as was necessary, and brought in food and drink. Oliver was allowed out of his solitary confinement for the afternoon, although several other guards had to be paid handsome sums to keep watch on him during the festivity.

Jamie, when he heard about it, thought it was morbid, and could not imagine how the revels could be anything other than gloomy, but Oliver, and Eleanor, surprised him, and he had forgotten the Irish capacity to enjoy themselves, and laugh, even in the teeth of death. They sang songs and swapped yarns, and relived the dreams of what might have been if their

rebellion had succeeded. They swore eternal friendship, and told dark jokes of the gallows.

Oliver stood up to speak. Visibly overcome with emotion, he called them his brothers, and thanked them for their loyalty and friendship. He stopped speaking, and seemed to be struggling to control his emotions.

Eleanor took his hand and held it, and he looked at his wife with a curious amazement, as if he needed to tell her something of utmost importance, that he had never known before.

He stumbled and slumped to the floor. Eleanor gave a little cry and ran to him, calling out his name. Others came to her help, but there was nothing they could do for Oliver, who had suffered a stroke. He died in Eleanor’s arms.

“Glory be, the ould bugger’s dead,” a man said gently to Eleanor. She clutched Oliver to her, and then remembered her duties as a hostess. She laid her husband on the floor, went to the table, and raised a mug of ale.

“To a glorious son of Ireland,” she shouted defiantly.

They cheered and drank to his memory.

Eleanor looked at the guards, who were jolted, and not sure what to do in the face of this unexpected crisis.

“To the Oliver,” Eleanor cried again, “and home rule for Ireland! “

The others cheered and drank with her again.

“To Ireland,” she said softly.

“To Ireland,” they all agreed, as softly as she.

Eleanor knelt on the floor beside her dead husband, stroked his face, and keened a gentle threnody for her lost love.

The death of Oliver Bond provided the British authorities with the catharsis they needed. The rebellion had been crushed; the leaders were dead, or, in the case of Lord Edward, mad. The association of United Irishmen was broken. There was little point in further persecution, because that might inflame the populace anew, and Britain wanted a settled colony and simply could not afford the men to police an Ireland of continuing turmoil. The empire was expanding rapidly, and the troops were needed in other trouble spots.

But they could not set the prisoners entirely free. Those convicted or suspected of only minor treason were offered the

chance to sign a confession of all their misdeeds, and would then be released on the condition that they leave Ireland forever.

It was exile, or banishment, Jamie understood, but it was preferable to a lifetime behind bars, or a possible death by hanging. In any case, there was

nothing for him in Ireland now, He talked with his uncle Henry, who was of a similar opinion.

“I’ve fought the good fight all my days,” he said, “and I do not think I have lost, for it will go on. But I’m getting old, and I want a settled life, before I am too old to enjoy it.”

“Where will you go?” Jamie asked him.

“America, of course,” Uncle Henry replied, slightly surprised that his nephew had the need to ask. “Where else is there?”

Jamie laughed. It was so very obvious, and it had probably been in the back of his mind, but buried beneath a mountain of worry.

“Half of Ireland is already there, and your brothers,” Uncle Henry reminded him. “John is doing well in Philadelphia. I shall join him there.”

He wondered what his nephew would do, where he would go.

America, I guess.” Jamie shrugged, because he couldn’t think of anywhere else. He wasn’t very good at languages, and he didn’t want to live among foreigners all his life, so there was nowhere in Europe for him. He wasn’t allowed to live in Britain. So he chose America, if only by default. And having chosen, he felt his soul tingle a little, for America represented a great, new adventure, free of danger, free of the complications of having to choose between his Irish people and his English masters. A place that now, in his moment of direst need, at the time of his banishment, at the start of exile, gave him a haven. He did not choose America just to save himself from prison, but he did choose America because it would give him freedom.

They were released in rough order of their imprisonment, Henry some weeks before Jamie. When his time came, Jamie answered their questions and signed his confession. His papers

were put in order by the prison officials, and he was provided with a warrant that allowed him time to get his affairs in order, and, if necessary, pass through an English port on the way to his destination. It was assumed he could support himself financially because his fattier was known to be wealthy. He was released on a cold autumn day. He had been in prison for nearly two years.

He went straight to his uncle Henry's house and was warmly received. His first priority was a hot bath, to rid his body and hair of dirt and lice, and his uncle burned his old clothes, and gave him new ones. Henry was leaving for America within the week. He had sold his house and his ironworks at rock-bottom prices, but he had enough for a good start in the new world.

"A new start at my age," Henry said wryly. "But then, all things are possible."

He offered money, but Jamie, whether from pride or foolishness, would not take it.

He moved to Eleanor's and spent a quiet Christmas with his sister. For the first time since Oliver's death, they talked of him, but Eleanor, although she wore the formal black of mourning and grieved for her husband, was more concerned about the future. At midnight on the last night of the year, she gave him champagne, and they drank to the challenges ahead. It was the end of the old century, and the beginning of the new.

"I had wonderful times with Oliver," she said, "no matter how short. But he is gone from us, and we must look forward. "

She had few plans of her own, but as yet she was still coming to terms with her widowhood, and asked what Jamie would do.

I 'America," he smiled, and Eleanor laughed.

"Of course, a new land for a new century," she said. "It is the proper place for a young man to be. This old world is too decadent. "

She folded her hands neatly on her lap, and looked at her young brother coyly.

"It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that I might go there myself," she

smiled.

"But how could you leave Ireland?" he cried, both thrilled and shocked.

Oliver was already perceived by the people as a martyr to the Irish cause, and she, as his widow, a heroine.

"Tush," she said. "As easily as you will do."

She looked sad, and Jamie thought she might cry, and he knew that if she ever did leave Ireland it would not be as easy for her as she pretended.

But she shook her head, and busied herself with his business. She asked if he had any money, and Jamie lied, but she knew that. She gave him a small purse of coins, and when he protested told him not to be a romantic fool.

"You have to eat, boy," she said. "You have to live."

He took the purse, and she hesitated for a moment before asking her next question.

"Shall you go and see Father?"

Jamie nodded. He had no alternative. His father was his only possible source of money for his passage, and he wanted to make his peace with the man who had given him birth, and whom he might never see again.

He stayed with Eleanor until Washington came from Baltybay, to return to his school in Dublin. Washington was thrilled to see his daring brother, and they pumped hands and slapped each other on the back, and sparred with each other, laughingly, as brothers do. When he heard of Jamie's plans, Washington let out a yell of jealousy, because America was his dream; he longed to go there, and fight Indians. He swore he would join Jamie as soon as he had finished school, and they would have a rollicking time together. The brothers shared a room in

Eleanor’s house, and talked themselves to sleep each night with plans for the future. And they talked of Ballybay.

Things had improved for their father, Washington told him, since the rebellion was put down. The local British had shown tokens of desire to make amends, and pretend they had no hard feelings. The linen mill was too valuable to them to do otherwise.

Jamie bought new clothes with some of the money Eleanor had given him, and a cheap horse from the livery stables. He rode toward Ballybay, and saw the country with adult eyes, and not those of an impetuous boy. He loved it still, but it

seemed dank, and a little dirty to him, and the grinding poverty of the peasants depressed him. The white-walled cottages that had once represented home to him looked small and shabby now, and he began to despise the superstitious, docile peasants who had not been able to rid their land of a governing power, despite their greater numbers. Bands of homeless trekked the road, looking for shelter, and ignored him, or turned away from him, for he was better dressed than they. Beggars were not so fearful of him, and accosted him. Redcoated soldiers tramped the highways, and would stop him, and ask for his papers, and snigger when they saw he was banished. He despised being a marked man, and looked forward to the new life that awaited him, not so far away, just across the ocean.

The song of America sang in his ears, and he was already casting off the shackles of his old country.

On reaching Ballybay, he went to Maureen and Patrick’s cottage, to tell them the details of Sean’s brave death and lie about his burial. They greeted him politely, but suspiciously. They knew their son was dead, and Jamie’s tales of his bravery hardly comforted them, for their hearts were empty. They were glad he died as a

hero, but they did not want him dead.

Jamie could not resist the feeling that they resented him, because he had survived.

He rode to his father's estate, and looked at the linen mill beside the river. From before his birth, hundreds of peasants had toiled there, earning a pittance from his wealthy father, whose sympathies lay not with them, but with himself, and the British. For a moment he was not sure which made him more angry, the blind acceptance by the peasants of their lot, or the exploitation of them by the ruling class.

"They could get out, get away," he shouted to the wind, "Like me, to America!"

The call of his new land, his new life exhilarated him, and he galloped up the drive to his father's house, loving the clean fresh air of freedom. Jugs might have been waiting for him, for she ran from the house when she heard his horse, and cried out his name. She threw her apron over her head, and sat on the steps weeping, because he was safe, and home again.

He turned her tears to laughter by picking her up and swing—

ing her round, gasping good-naturedly with the effort.

"Put me down," she cried. "I'm too heavy!"

11 Yes, you are!" he laughed, and put her down. She held his face in her hands and looked at him closely, as if inspecting every pore of him, to see what the world had done to her boy. Satisfied that there were no visible scars of his wars, she hugged him, and old Quinn came by, looking older now, and walking with a stick. He shook Jamie's hand, and winked that he would hear all his news in the stable, when old Jugs was done with him.

She took him to the kitchen, and fed him mugs of thick sweet tea, and oatcakes, and begged to hear all he had done.

He told her of his adventures, but briefly, because he could tell Jugs did not want the details, they were too distressing for her. She crossed herself when he described how Scan died, and she cursed the British when he described Newgate Prison.

He told her he had to leave Ireland, and where he would go. Jugs turned her head away, to compose herself.

" 'Tis proper that ye go," she said. "There's nothing for ye here. "

She tried hard to look on the bright side.

"And half of Ireland is there afore ye. Ye'll not lack for friends. "

But she could not hide her fear.

"But, oh, Master Jamie," she cried. "Be careful of them Injuns. They's awful fierce, the heathen savages,"

He laughed and said he would be very careful, and then asked after his father.

"In his study," Jugs said. "He's waiting for ye."

Jamie went to his father's study, rapped on the door, and went in when called.

James Jackson was writing at his desk, and finished his signature before he looked at his son. He stared at him for a few moments, and nodded his head, as if in approval.

"You look none the worse for your misadventures," he said. "In fact, you look positively healthy."

"Good evening, sir," Jamie smiled. "I trust you are well."

His father nodded again. "Things have come to a sorry pass," he said. "I told you no good would come of mixing with croppies. "

Jamie felt a flash of anger, but controlled himself.

“I blame myself, of course,” his father continued. “I should have been stricter with you. I’m sorry if you found me wanting as a father. I tried to do my best by you.”

Jamie struggled hard to control a smile. It was hard for him to imagine how his father could have been stricter with him.

~‘To make some small amends I have booked you a passage to America. It is not until April-it seems it is a popular destination. I suppose you will want to stay here until then.”

It was not a gracious invitation, but Jamie was pondering something else.

How did he know about America? Had Eleanor told him’?

He accepted the envelope his father gave him. “Thank you, sir,” he said, but his father did not smile.

“I have also made arrangements for some portion of the family funds that would have come to you to be sent in letters of credit for your use in Philadelphia.”

Uncle Henry had told him, Jamie guessed. He had not talked to Eleanor about Philadelphia.

“After that,” James Jackson said, “you may not expect another penny from me, during my life, or in my will.”

Jamie’s cheeks flushed with angry shock. He had not expected much from his father, some few words of comfort, perhaps a little wellintentioned advice, or even a scolding. But he had not expected this. Banished and disinherited. It was a cruet world. He was being treated as an errant, headstrong boy. But he was not a boy anymore, he was a man, and he would show his father how much of a man he had become.

“I will make my own way in this new world,” he murmured, and could not

stop his voice from rising. “I will be richer than you ever imagined, and more powerful than you have ever been. And I will use my money wisely, like Lord Fitzgerald and Oliver Bond, in the people’s interest-”

“The people,” his father sneered. “The common rabble, you mean.”

Jamie was close to losing his temper and struggled to control himself.

“I take this because I must,” he said, holding up the envelope. “But I do not want one penny more of your money,

or your damned letters of credit, in your life or when you are dead. “

But he could not make his father believe him.

’-You will never amount to anything,” James Jackson said to his son.

Jamie wanted to cry out or to hit him, but he did neither. All the hope of all the love he had ever wanted from his father came to nothing, and he believed that his father had never cared one whit for him, for if he cared, how could he disparage him so?

“I will make a liar of you yet!” he shouted. Fists clenched in rage and bitter disappointment, he walked out of the room.

Jugs was waiting for him in the hall. She had heard the shouting through the door, and tried to make amends.

“He didn’t mean it,” she said. “He’s been worried about ye.

“He never cared about me for one day in his life,” Jamie replied. “But I will show him-you wait and see. I’ll prove him wrong.”

James Jackson sat at his desk, his face livid with rage, his hands trembling with anger. He had done his best by the boy, had offered him his portion, and it had

been thrown back in his face. He had tried to do his best by all his children, and all were ungrateful, and had turned on him.

All had been given every possible benefit when young, but their wretched flirtations with the nationalist movement had almost destroyed his life, his business, and their inheritance. He could not understand their stupidity and ingratitude.

He poured himself a brandy, and tried to calm down.

He had not wanted children, except a son, to inherit what he had created.

Sadly, children went hand in glove with what he did want, for he loved women, and needed their physical company. Since in order to have that physical companionship he must have children, and since because of his standing in the community he should have children, and because without an heir everything he worked for would die with him, he had raised a family. He was quite fond of each of them when they were little, but intolerant of their demands on his time. The difficulty of running and expanding a business such as his in

these troubled times had taken all his energy. He had provided his family with everything they needed, had employed nannies and teachers for them, and had asked, in return, simply that they behave themselves and not trouble him. Surely that was not selfish? But they had troubled him, to distraction, and when he could not accommodate the demands they made on him, they had turned against him. He did not mind the behavior of the girls so much, for they, at least, were pretty and womanly, and he actually admired and defended Eleanor, despite his opposition to her marriage. It was the boys who were truculent and troublesome, and he wondered if there was too much of himself in them, or if he simply envied their strength and youth and vitality. Most of all, he was disappointed in Jamie, who shared his love of horse racing, and who, he thought, might have been his true heir. In the end, even Jamie had let him down, and was off to America to join his wastrel brothers.

The sense of complete failure of his domestic life was shocking to him, but he did not blame himself. Matrimony, he decided, was an archaic institution, of peasant origin, and worthless to the modern man. He had refused to marry his mistress, Sarah Black, because he did not want to be disappointed by marriage again, but she was content with the hours he could give her, and he bad two fine boys by her, who appreciated him and never asked for more than he could give. Why could not his legitimate children be the same?

But still Jamie was his son, and he could not send him out into the world without some provision for his welfare. He wrote to his lawyer advising that Jamie should be excised from his will, but he did not cancel the letters of credit. Whether the boy chose to use the money or not was up to him. He had done his duty as a father. In the morning he went to Belfast on business, and never made contact with Jamie again.

Jamie spent a day with Sara and Jimmy at their cottage, and they envied his plans. With Washington at school in Dublin, Jimmy was no longer employed as tutor, but had found some few hours of part-time work, with other families, but was hardpressed to make a living. They had often talked of emigrating, and Jamie’s plans gave their own fresh impetus.

Jamie laughed that soon the whole family would be there.

“And why not?” Sara asked. “What is there for us here?” Jamie was anxious to be gone from his father’s house. He planned to return to Dublin and to find work for a month, to give him some spending money, or to ask Eleanor for a loan. He spent a happy evening with old Quinn in the barn, talking of racehorses and getting drunk on poteen, and said a tearful farewell to Jugs, when he staggered into the kitchen late that night.

She saw the moment she had been waiting for, and pressed a small bag of money into his hand. It was not much, but as much as he needed. He looked at it

in surprise, and sobered up fast.

“It is some part of my savings,” she said. “And ye have need of it. “

“I can’t take this, Jugs,” he protested, for her generosity embarrassed him. She was a poor woman, and he could have been rich.

“Oh, tosh,” she said. “Put it in your pocket, for I know ye have none.

Ye think I could rest easy with you going off to that savage land and not a penny to bless yourself with?”

He would not take it.

” I have no need of it, ” she cried. ” I have everything here. And, sensibly, she gave him a way out.

“It is a loan,” she said. “Ye can easy pay me back when ye’ve made your fortune.”

That, and his need, convinced him, and he swore that he would pay back every penny of it. He kept his word. From the first few dollars he earned in America, he sent small sums back to Jugs until the loan was paid off, and he continued to send her money for the rest of her life.

The following morning, at dawn, Sara and Jimmy came to the house to wish him Godspeed, and they stood with Jugs and old Quinn, and watched him trot down the drive and away, out of their lives. Then they went inside and sat with Jugs, who wept for the boy she had raised and would never see again.

The sadness and many tears of the leavetaking depressed Jamie, and halfway down the drive he spurred his horse to a gallop. The sudden energy and easy motion of the horse broke

him from melancholy, for he was on his way at last. He galloped through the chill morning, the crisp wind biting his hands and ears, and felt an extraordinary power of masculinity within him, for he was taking on the world.

He stayed with Eleanor in Dublin again, and said his goodbyes to his sister and Washington, and in late March he took the ferry to Liverpool.

As the boat sailed out of the harbor, he looked back on his native land with little regret, for his father's insult still rang in his ears.

"You will never amount to anything."

He would amount to something, he swore to himself. He was casting off his old life and taking on a new. He was not a boy anymore, he was a man, hardened by life, blooded in war, forged in prison.

He was not young Jamie either. The diminutive always made him feel little, if loved, and not quite a man. It had been used to distinguish him from his father, but there was no need of it now, for he had no father. A new name for a new life seemed fitting, and anyway, it was not a new name, it was his true name, and his father's name, and perhaps to spite the man who had sired him, he called out his name.

"James," he shouted at the seagulls.

And again, to convince himself.

"I am James."

In May, when he sailed from Liverpool on the good ship America, under the command of Captain Silas Swain and bound for Philadelphia, the passenger manifest listed him simply as James Jackson.

The ship pitched and rolled, and mountainous waves endlessly broke over the bow. The storm had raged for two days, and the passengers had come to believe that the ship could not withstand the tempest, and must break apart. Most of the passengers, apart from James and some of the crew, were wretchedly ill, and spent their days in their cabins, moaning their fear and their distress. To a few of those who had never been to sea, the sickness and fear were worse than death, and they begged the good Lord for deliverance, and if that meant the ship would be smashed apart and plunge them to a watery grave, it was preferable to their present plight. There was talk of mutiny among some of the men who had no experience of the sea, of forcing the captain to return to port, but he, an old sea dog, only laughed at them.

"Would You have me go back into the teeth of the gale when we have nearly ridden it out?"

They were hardly convinced that an end to their suffering was in sight, but it gave them a small hope, and they could not countenance going back and into the storm again.

The missionary Reverend Blake and his good wife spent hours on their knees, when they were not on their bunks being ill, praying to their Savior to calm the seas, as at Galilee, and on the third day, when the waves subsided and the wind abated, they believed He had wrought a miracle.

Jamie found his sea legs early. The Irish Sea had been choppy, but he soon got used to the rolling motion of the ship and spent happy hours on deck, watching the sailors clamber up the ropes with the agility of monkeys, furling or unfurling the vast sheets of canvas to mysterious commands, or singing sea chanteys when, as if on their knees in a pagan temple to the 50

sea, they holystoned the wooden decks to a pristine whiteness. He loved the salty, briny wind, and the companionship of his fellow passengers, who shared,

in varying degrees, a fear of their formidable voyage, but were united in a common optimism that their destination would be the earthly paradise they sought.

The great port of Liverpool had excited and frustrated him. He was overawed by the huge numbers of ships in the harbor, which had journeyed from every comer of the earth, bringing with them strange and exotic cargoes. He smelled the scent of spices he had never known, and watched in wonder the unloading of the chests of tea from India and silks from China and cotton from Madras, sheets of raw cork from Portugal, and oranges from Spain. He loved being among the community of seafaring folk, the hardy and colorful sailors, rings in their ears and tattoos on their arms, who walked with a rolling gait, as the rolling sea had taught them. He saw small brown men from the Malacca Straits, and blond descendants of the Vikings, giants to him, and heard strange languages that were beautiful and others that grated on his ears. He loved the women of the dockside, raw and lusty creatures, who cheered when the ships docked and wept when they left, and he spent days in tiny smoky taverns by the water, hearing tall tales of the seven seas, and Africa and Madagascar, the Azores and the Caribbean, Araby and Siam.

And he saw a black boy, the first he had ever seen.

A welldressed woman came to the docks to greet her returning husband, a captain. Behind her trotted a little black boy, elegantly appareled in velvet and a turban, and around his neck was a long silver chain, with which his mistress led him. Like a pet dog, James thought, and watched as they passed by, fascinated by the ebony child. He had heard of these African creatures, niggers as they were called, heathen sava-es, who ran around naked in their native jungles, bloodthirsty warriors, licentious animals.

He heard of the slave ships that sailed from England to Africa with cargoes of iron or manufactured goods, and from Africa to America with cargoes of naked savages, and from America back to England with raw cotton, or tobacco, or rice. He had heard of the calls for abolition of the slave trade from

some of the church people, and the furious opposition to that abolition, for the slaves were apparently the most lucrative of all cargoes, and some of the planters in America claimed they could not survive without the labor. He had no special feelings about it, for it was not part of his life. The fate of these odd and alien creatures did not matter to him, one way or the other.

He grew impatient as his days of waiting wore on, for he longed to be at sea himself, to experience some of what he had heard about, off on his own great adventure. He lost a little money to a prostitute and a little more to a pickpocket. He avoided the city itself and stayed near the docks, for he quickly discovered that his Irish accent caused him to be disparaged among people whose own dialect seemed primitive and guttural to him.

When he boarded his ship at last, the cramped spaces belowdecks surprised him, and he banged his head several times on overhead beams, before leaming to duck, as the sailors did, as naturally as breathing. He shared his cramped and crowded cabin with five others, Englishmen who loved their country and couldn't wait to leave it. Good-humoredly, they denigrated the Americans as ungrateful and troublesome colonists, but were anxious to be of their number. They baited him for a bog-Irish peasant, and he took their jokes in good part, but they wearied him, and sometimes he had trouble controlling his temper. The tiny cabin was claustrophobic, and the natural human stench of his fellows reminded James of his time in prison.

He talked with the first officer, and they gave him a hammock, and on the pleasanter nights, he slung that hammock up on deck, with the sailors, and slept pleasantly, rocked by the gentle wind.

The food was awful but edible, pickled pork and potatoes for the first few weeks, dried beef and hardtack later. The lore of the sea fascinated him, the defined but easy hierarchy, the absolute power of the captain, the endless, easy grumbling of the tars, and the constant cheerful resentment by all the seamen of their tantalizing, temperamental bitch goddess, the sea, which they loved with all their hearts.

They talked with him about their country, for which they had a deep and abiding affection, and gave him some sense

of the awesome size of it. James had always known that America was a large country. Now he leamed that the United States was but a small fraction of that continent. The physical land itself ranged from the ice-ridden north to the tropical south, encompassing mountains and deserts, forests and wilderness, and some of the finest farming land in the world. The British still ruled the northern part, Canada, the Mexicans controlled the and southwest and the legendary California, and the French, under Napoleon, had assumed from the Spanish the great southern region of swamps and jungle that was known as Florida.

"Go west," they told him. "A man can find his true self there, and own land beyond his imagining, just for the taking. "

For themselves, they had found their fortune at sea. So many of the young men of America went west, to settle the vast new territories, that sailors were in short supply, and well paid because of it, They cursed the British, who ruled the seas, and frequently stopped and boarded American ships, and pressed into service any of the crew who still maintained British nationality. They nodded their heads wisely at the stories of the savage Indians, but dismissed them as any threat to the settled colonies. The Indians were retreating, to the west, before the settlers' advance, and soon must stand with their backs to the great Pacific Ocean, and then where would they go?

As they sailed on, he began to understand something of that love, for there was only the sea, always the sea, endlessly the sea. fie was lost in a world of water and sky, on which the sun rose each morning, and the stars and moon each night, and always, the crew told him, where they were supposed to be. The small ship became their only world, and each aboard it was joined to the others by a strange and powerful sense of community, united before a common foe, a common love, that was awesome in its breadth and power.

The storm came, and frightened James at first, for he could not imagine that they could survive it. He was forced to sleep in his cabin, when he could sleep, and the men with him were as scared as he.

"Surely America must be heaven," one said. "For you have to go through hell to get there. "

He preferred the attitude of the sailors, for they respected the wrath of the tempest, and were not overawed by it. They believed in their survival because of their skill and seamanship, their stoutly built craft, and because they had weathered worse, much worse, before.

Then winds abated and the seas quieted, and for the next few weeks they sailed through calmer water, blue skies, and sunny weather. Flying fishes tripped through the whitecaps, and landed sometimes on the deck, and were good eating. At night the tars would gather round the capstan and sing chanteys, and dance strange steps that were, James guessed, centuries old, and known only to men of the sea. He laughed with the others when the two apprentices had their cars pierced with hot needles against cork, and wore the small threads of blue wool proudly, for days to come, as symbols of their initiation as mariners.

He learned the map of the stars in heaven, and the directions of the wind. He saw whales, enormous creatures that spouted water from their backs like fountains, and could not believe what his eyes told him. He began to believe all the legends of the sea, of mermaids and sirens, and strange monsters from the deep. He lay in the bow for hours, in the sunshine days, delighting at the dolphins as they frolicked at the prow, and believed, as the sailors did, that these joyous creatures were guardians, guiding them safely to haven.

He felt safe in their company, and as he watched them, following where they led, he dreamed of the life that would soon be his, on the distant shores that the dolphins knew.

Bom to money, born to a secure station, his father's ffiends were oriented toward England, and many regarded the former colonies of America still as colonies, a hostile land of fort-ner convicts and the dregs of Europe, governed by unscrupulous merchants and planters, and constantly threatened by wild Indian savages. None denied the riches that could be made there, but all disparaged the way those riches were made, and the resulting lawless, classless society, in which Mammon was the only God.

Yet the sailors told of a different America, of freedom and peace and a settled life. Go west, they told him, where a few dollars will buy a thousand acres, and a man could be a king

in his own castle. If he could survive the Indians.

From his Protestant teachers at school in Dublin, he had heard of a different America again, of a land free of religious intolerance, a land where idyllic, Godfearing communities could flourish in peace and tranquillity. If they could survive the Indians.

From his school friends, he had heard of an untamed paradise, where wild animals roamed the wilderness, and a man could test himself against nature, and find undiscovered territories, and be hailed as an exploring hero. If he could survive the Indians.

His rebel friends had told him of a utopian society of political freedom, whose brave, pioneering citizens had risen up against the colonial yoke, and broken the shackle of it, had triumphed over Britain, and had spat in the face of the mad king. A land where all men were regarded as equal, and all had equal opportunity-to be a simple farmer or leader of their fledgling democracy, as they chose. If they could survive the Indians.

From his peasant friends he teamed of a different America yet, a new Erin that had cast off its colonial shackles, and become a safe haven for all who sought refuge there, a land of boundless opportunity, the streets of whose small cities were paved with gold, and whose black soil was the richest anywhere in the world. A land where simple peasants could find shelter, and be respected as human beings, and could own their own land, beholden to no one, paying rent to no absentee landlord across the seas, and where they could grow old in security and leave something for their children to inherit. If they could survive the Indians.

From Jimmy Hanna, he had teamed of the Founding Fathers, and the Declaration of Independence, which was, according to Jimmy, the simplest, most eloquent foundation for the creation of an idyllic country that had ever been

written, the culmination of three thousand years of human reason, Jimmy Hanna was not as concerned about the Indians as the others.

They are heathen savages, he said, and they will come to God or they will perish, for America is God's gift to us, a reward for all our labors.

He realized something that came as a sweet surprise to him.

All his life he had sought a cause to believe in and to fight for. He had thought it was the Irish peasants, but he was not of their number, and so that cause was adopted, false, and not of his true soul. For a time he had thought it was the nationalist cause, of being a foot soldier in the glorious war of ridding Ireland of foreign domination, as the Americans had done, but now he believed that cause hopeless, and Ireland lost.

America.

The word, the name, kept ringing in his ears. America, land of freedom and liberty. America, land of promise and fulfillment. America, where all men were equal, and could lead pleasant, fulfilling lives in the pursuit of happiness.

America.

America was his cause, he knew, America was his passion, America was his creed. He would become a good citizen of his new country, and work to take advantage of the boundless opportunity it afforded. He would go west, and build an estate of such magnitude that his father must apologize, and stand in awe of him, for he would be magnificent. He would not forget the experiences of his youth; he would dedicate his life to his fellowmen, and strive for the ideals of America, of liberty for all and the equality of all men, and if necessary, he would die in defense of what he believed. He could not think of a nobler cause.

They had been at sea for weeks, and for a time all had been bored with their

They had been at sea for weeks, and for a time all had been bored with their journey and with each other, but they knew they must be nearing their destination, and they began to forget the quarrels they had with their temporary traveling companions, and looked forward to the new life.

Progressively, with each meal, with each conversation, the subject turned more and more to what they hoped to achieve after landfall, and James discovered his passion was shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by them all, and it reinforced his own.

He was dozing in the prow one sunny afternoon, and woke to a strange cry he had never heard before. A sense of anticipation and excitement buzzed through the crew and the passengers, and they ran to the side of the ship.

The cry came again, from the lookout, who had a better vantage point high in the crow's nest.

"Land ho! " -

It was Newfoundland, the land so newly found, and although they could not see it, they knew it was there, for one of their number had seen it, and it would appear to all of them soon. Gulls appeared, as if from nowhere, the cawing heralds of their arrival.

"I see it!" Reverend Blake cried. He pointed to the horizon, and then fell to his knees, his wife beside him, to pray for whatever it was he wanted to find, or give thanks for what he had endured.

James, from his vantage point in the bow, climbed onto the bowsprit and saw it now, a thin, dark sliver of something, between the sea and the sky. He cried out in joy, and his soul sang. As they sailed on, the sliver got larger and longer, and changed from black to a deep and misty blue.

The land shimmered before them, lazy, hazy, repository of all their dreams and aspirations. They had left unsatisfactory lives behind them for the promise

of untainted opportunity; they had cut themselves adrift from all they held dear, from the soil of their birth and the bonds of their families. They had escaped from rigid and unyielding societies in search of something better, fairer, and had put their faith in a small and fragile boat, and a dream that was intangible and glorious, the right to carve out their own lives, according to the destiny they perceived for themselves, and a dream of freedom, in whatever form they desired that freedom to be.

They had found what they sought.

America.

7

Philadelphia was almost everything he hoped it would be, but not quite in the way he had imagined.

His very first impressions of the city had confirmed for him, if he needed such confirmation, that he had arrived at a place

that was quite unlike anything he had known. The streets were wide and straight, and well ordered. The houses were clean, brightly painted, and built of red brick or wood, unlike the stone buildings of Dublin, or even Liverpool, and the people who dwelt in those houses were a different breed.

There was a sense of bustle and purpose about them, tempered by an evident enjoyment of life. They seemed to be constantly going somewhere or doing something, always on the move and yet never too busy to stop and bid a cheery greeting to friends. They were casual in their language and relationships and dress. Many of the men, and some of the women, had adopted trousers, rather than breeches, and tricoms instead of top hats. Their language shocked him. They cursed and swore commonly, and yet there was an abundance of churches. It was a town of immigrants, and he heard the Irish brogue often, but German

It was a town of immigrants, and he heard the Irish brogue often, but German and French as frequently. The summer weather was hot and humid, but it had little effect on those who were used to it, and they bustled about their business as if it were a mild spring day.

Everyone had an opinion as to how money could he made, and everyone had an opinion as to how best their country could be run, but these opinions were divergent and often contradictory. The only common certainty was the passion of their belief in their country, and of their own ability to prosper. That they prospered was beyond question. James had never seen such general wellbeing, and while there were poor, their poverty would have been riches to an Irish peasant.

Suddenly, the reason for this casual vibrancy occurred to James. Americans said what they liked because they could, and did what they liked because they could. For the first time in his life he was living in a place that did not have a sense of oppression. No one had any need to look over his shoulder before whispering a complaint of the ruling class, because there was no ruling class. Those who governed were elected by the people, and were beholden to them,

At that moment of realization, so simple and yet so profound, James's soul took wing, and he understood the enormity of freedom, and knew that he was free. He was humbled by it, and his sense of gratitude to America was unbounded.

His brothers had prospered along with everyone else, and were generous with their success. They had welcomed Uncle Henry to their business when he arrived, just as they welcomed their brother James. They had a large provisions store, and supplied to and bought from farmers as far away as Tennessee. The arrival of Henry had enabled them to expand, and Hugh and Alexander had gone to Baltimore, to open a branch there, while John and his uncle supervised things in Philadelphia. They took James into their hearts and their affairs, employed him immediately, and, because he had a natural aptitude for accounting, within a year they had made him a full partner.

Thus James prospered with America, and teamed the contradictions that came with that prosperity. He lodged in an elegant boardinghouse in High Street, run by the formidable Mrs. Bankston. The rooms were spacious and high-ceilinged, and adequately, if simply, furnished. There was a large ballroom, with columns grained in imitation of marble, wide-board, immaculately polished floors, and intricate Oriental rugs. The house had been the home of George Washington when Philadelphia had been the capital, and it amused James, and gave him no small sense of triumph, that he lived in what had been a presidential palace. Several of the staff were black, and James assumed that they must be slaves until Mrs.

Bankston disenchanted him.

I ‘They are free men,” Mrs. Bankston sniffed. “I do not hold with slavery.”

Mrs. Bankston didn’t hold with a lot of things. She ruled her staff with a rod of iron, and didn’t hold with her niggers getting uppity.

“They are prone to it,” she sniffed. “Because they are so recently from the jungle, and civilization has gone to their heads. “

She didn’t hold with her gentlemen guests receiving ladies in their rooms. She didn’t hold with drunkenness; she didn’t hold with atheists; she didn’t hold with taxes.

“I had to board up many of my windows,” she sniffed. “Because the property tax is based on the size and number Of one’s windows. It is iniquitous. It is atheistic heresy to tax God’s daylight.”

She didn’t hold with politicians, who were intent on accumulating the powers of monarchy unto themselves, and were

building palaces in the dismal swamp that was Washington, the new capital.

“I bless my cotton socks that the good Lord sent Thomas Jefferson to us,”

she sniffed. “He is a man of the people, unlike that Mr. Adams, who wanted to be king.”

She didn’t hold with the fact that the new president kept slaves on his estate in Virginia, but forgave him for it.

“He is good to his niggers,” she sniffed, and then lowered her voice. “Much too good to one of them, if rumors are to be believed, and even had children by her, if you take my meaning. “

She didn’t hold with Indians, who were nothing but bloodthirsty savages, she didn’t hold with anyone who lived in New York, which was a cesspool of vice, and she didn’t hold with New Englanders.

“They believe that God speaks only to them, and that only they know what is ordained for the country,” she sniffed. “They are plain folk, but arrogant in their humility. The sooner we are rid of them the better. “

Most of all, she didn’t hold with the British.

“They have never forgiven us for trouncing them,” she sniffed. “They regard us as disobedient children. Mark my words-they will try to smack our naughty posteriors for it

yet. “

James understood that well, because he remembered his own father, but some of the things Mrs. Bankston didn’t hold with confused him. He went to his brother John for clarification,

John laughed. “It is the great flaw of equality,” he explained. “For it means that everyone believes that only they know what is best for the others.”

The United States, he told James, was not one country but a collection of independent, sovereign countries, which had forgotten their differences and banded together to defeat the British. Once they had achieved their aim, they were not quite sure what to do next. They had a federation but no common purpose anymore, other than an idea. Some wanted a return of the monarchy in

some form; others wanted a true democracy; some wanted to break away from the loose federation

and form confederations of smaller numbers of states, or go it alone. The states fought and bickered and argued among themselves, and somehow held fast. Many in New England, with Boston as its capital, were resolutely opposed to any expansion of the original thirteen states, believing the result would be unwieldy.

“What they really mean is that their own power and influence would be reduced,” John said.

Many in the South, the slaveholding states, wanted to break away and form their own country, a slave country, or to extend the number of slave states so that their own influence would be increased.

Virginia was the glue that had kept the country together. Although it was a slaveholding state, it was balanced between the two major factions, North and South, slave and free, and it had produced giant men and giant minds, who had a dream of America and the ruthless will to make that dream a reality.

“I don’t know how long it can last as it is,” John said. “But it will survive in some form or another. America is inevitable.”

The issue of slavery confused James most of all. The few blacks in Philadelphia were free, but were largely disparaged and despised by the whites. Jungle bunnies, they were called, who were lucky to be allowed the crumbs from the white man’s table. Yet they were not enslaved. Again, John provided clarification.

“It is New England again. The great argument of the federation was that the Puritans and Calvinists and Quakers would not tolerate slavery, and the Southern states would not abolish it. A compromise was reached, but, like all compromises, it is hardly satisfactory, because it leaves the issue unresolved.”

The compromise was that the Northern states would be free states and the Southern states slave states, but neither side was happy with the status quo. The Southerner wanted new, slaveholding territories admitted to the Union, thus increasing the power of the South, and the North as strongly resisted the expansion of the Union under those terms.

None of this helped James's confusion. He did not know what he thought of slavery because he had not yet encountered it. He knew of free blacks in Philadelphia who were doing

extremely well. One, a sailmaker called Fortan, was reputed to earn over one hundred thousand dollars a year. At the other end of the scale, Mrs.

Bankston's blacks were hardly literate.

"They were not meant to read or write," Mrs. Bankston sniffed. "They are put here to serve us, to atone for the sins of their ancestor, Ham, who mocked his father, Noah. God cursed them for it. That is why they are black."

Certainly, the black staff served James well, and he heard that during a recent outbreak of yellow fever, when many whites had fled the city, the blacks had stayed, and volunteered to work in the hospitals.

He felt inadequate to argue with Mrs. Bankston because she claimed the Bible as her authority. James had only a superficial acquaintance with the Good Book. So he shrugged his shoulders on the matter of niggers and slavery, because it did not directly concern him, and went about his business.

In the first flush of his flirtation with Philadelphia, he had abandoned his intention to go west, to find some idyllic spot and build a simple country life for himself, but his growing confusion at the contradictions of the city rekindled his earlier dream.

He had thought America to be a classless society, but quickly discovered he was wrong. If there was no ruling class as such, there was certainly a form of aristocracy, with wealth as its bloodline, and its members could be at least as arrogant as their more illustrious counterparts in Europe.

John was a citizen of some standing, and invited to many fine houses. He took his brother with him sometimes, to introduce him, because James was young, and handsome and eligible. James discovered that he enjoyed being the center of attention for the many charming young ladies of the elite. He flirted with them outrageously, to their delight, and the greater, evident pleasure of their mothers, who saw him as a potential suitor for their daughters. Invitations flooded to him, and he was invited to the annual Pemberton ball, the finest evening on the Philadelphia social calendar.

The display of wealth was almost too gaudy. He had never seen such opulence and extravagance. The tables were heaped with food, hams and lobsters and crabs and pheasant and ven-

ison and tempting cakes and trifles, and fruits he had never before seen.

The men were simply but handsomely attired in dark velvets, as if they did not want to distract from the beauty of their female companions. The women were gorgeous. The younger wore elegant, simple gowns, cut low to reveal their breasts in a way that James found delightfully shocking.

Their mothers and aunts were more cautiously dressed, but still the rainbow colors of the silks and satins and velvets enchanted him, and the clusters of jewels on necks, fingers, arms, and ears dazzled his eyes.

The splendid musicians played lively gigs, black servants dressed in white kept his glass filled with champagne, and he danced as heartily as ever in his life.

Giddy with happiness, he was introduced to his hosts and their daughter, Lucy

Pemberton. He smiled his most mischievous smile, told Lucy how pretty she was, and begged to be allowed the honor of a dance.

Somewhat to his surprise, Lucy found a place on her card for him immediately, and accepted his arm. To his further surprise, many of those watching applauded as the couple stepped to the dance.

"You will never amount to anything."

James wished his father could see him now, for he had already amounted to something, an eligible young bachelor with money in his pocket, dancing with the most desirable young lady in the city. He had been in America for only a year, was hardly on his way, and yet he was already more than his father had been.

Lucy's dress was in the French Empire style, and exceedingly low cut.

James could hardly take his eyes from her delicious breasts, which must bounce from their muslin restraints, he was sure, if she danced too energetically.

"We haven't seen you before," Lucy said sweetly, and James turned on his most charming, self-effacing smile.

"No," he laughed. "I just got off the boat."

Lucy trilled a silly laugh and told him how worried she was about the conditions in Ireland.

"Indeed, they are terrible," James agreed, his eyes drifting to her bosom.

"With all those peasants dying, how will we ever get our supplies of linen?" Lucy twittered.

James said nothing because he could think of nothing to say. He tried to keep

the smile on his face, and concentrated on Lucy's breasts, but they had lost their attraction for him. He finished the dance and delivered Lucy to her parents, and shortly afterward he left the party without telling John of his departure.

He walked home with a dull and simmering anger churning in his stomach. He was appalled at Lucy's callousness. Peasants, his friends, were dying, and all she could think about was her precious linen. He couldn't blame her; she was just a silly, vapid girl who didn't know what she was talking about. He directed much of his anger at himself, because he did know better, and he began to question his goals. Although he had worked hard, he had been idle in the pursuit of his dream since he had come to America. He had taken what he had been given by his brothers, but had created nothing for himself. He was doing well by other people's standards, but not nearly well enough by his own. He had been sidetracked by his need to be accepted as a member of this new society, but it was all glitter and frippery. He had not earned his invitation to the Pembertons'; it had come to him for superficial reasons-because of his looks, and his family, and his bachelor state.

He was not his own man; he was other people's toy. He had abandoned his principles to pursue social acceptance; he had allowed himself to be seduced by wealth and glamour and-that word that he hated-class. In his depression, other aspects of life in Philadelphia became distasteful to him. He was tired of the interminable political arguments about what America should be. America was America, and that was enough. He was bored with the constant raging against Britain and France; he had fought that battle in his youth, and had come to America to be free of it. Yet he was angry at the way both Britain and France seemed to be playing games with the new country, the British Navy harassing American ships, and the French emissaries trying to seduce America into the Napoleonic cause. He wanted a simple life, with no great, moral issues to consider.

John and Uncle Henry had eased him into this new world and he was grateful

for it, but it was time to strike out on his own.

He had money. Quite apart from what he earned, the sum that had come to him from his father was sitting in the bank, earning interest. When he first heard of it, James refused to touch it, determined to keep his vow that he would take nothing from his father, but Uncle Henry had called him a fool.

“It’s your money, boy,” he said. “Will you send it back?”

James didn’t send it back, but neither did he use it. He decided to save it, in case he ever had need of it.

His problem was that he didn’t know what to use it for. Or where to go.

Or what to do.

He was distracted from his new melancholy by the arrival, as promised, of his younger brother.

Washington bounded off the boat and into America with a zest and energy that left James breathless. Unscarred by life, full of Irish blarney, bright-eyed and apple-cheeked, Washington ripped into life with careless abandon. Women adored him, men shook their heads in wonder, and everyone envied his joyous youth. Mrs. Bankston mothered him, John and Uncle Henry took him into the business, and James found in him the same rapture of companionship that he had found with Scan.

He brought them family news. Eleanor had married again, to an older merchant, Thomas Kirkman, and they had a daughter, Mary. Sara and Jimmy also had a daughter, another Mary, and a second child on the way. Martha, their other sister, was grievously ill, and Eleanor was taking care of her two girls.

He brought no news for James from his father.

Jugs was pining for James, but did not want him to return. The social and political situation had got worse since the socalled Act of Union with Britain. The persecutions of the Catholics continued with unabated ferocity, and mass evictions of the peasants had turned half the country into homeless wanderers.

“But to hell with Ireland,” Washington shouted in glee. “We’re here now!”

He could find nothing bad to say about the country. When it snowed and others grumbled of the cold, he built snowmen.

When it rained, he said it reminded him of Ireland, and when the sun shone, he turned his face to it, and said home was never like this. In the stifling summer he said it made him appreciate winter more, and in the winter he said how much he would enjoy the summer. In the spring he was the first to cast off his heavy clothes, and in the fall he stood before the changing leaves and applauded them for their fabulous display.

“If this is good,” he said to James, “how much better is it in the wilderness?”

James couldn’t tell him. He’d never been farther than Baltimore.

“Man, what are we waiting for?” Washington urged. “There’s a whole world out there.”

He was the stuff of pioneers, ready to take on anything with a laugh and a smile, ready to put his muscles to any task, ready to carve out his own life.

He had wild dreams of becoming a hunter and living in a log cabin by a brook in some sylvan glade. He wanted to catch a bear. He wanted to watch beavers build dams. And he wanted to see an Indian.

“Nashville,” John said, tapping a letter with his fingers. Uncle Henry nodded.

James was uncertain. He hardly knew where Nashville was, although they did a fair business with the settlement.

“Isn’t that a long way away?”

“Out west,” John agreed. “Hundreds of miles.”

“Thirty days traveling if you make good speed,” Uncle Henry concurred.

Nashville was almost the frontier of the settled world. Beyond it was only the territory of Missouri, a wild Indian land, and the Mississippi River, and beyond that was a foreign country, the Mexican province of Texas. To the south was Louisiana, which Jefferson had just purchased, against the strident opposition of the New Englanders, from Napoleon.

John believed that the Purchase would open up vast new territories for settlement, and that Nashville would be the gateway, for it was the junction between the East Coast and New Orleans. If James and Washington wanted to go to Nashville and open a store, John would provide them with credit and supplies.

“What are we waiting for?” Washington cried, already chasing bison in his head.

“Be careful,” John said with a smile. “They’re rough men there.”

He looked at the letter he was holding and passed it to James. It was from a customer in Nashville, Andrew Jackson-who was not related to them-and was full of complaints about the supplies he had received from them, and their prices.

“He’s a crusty curmudgeon,” John grinned. “He’s cross because he sold his cotton early, and the prices have gone through the roof since. I warned him, but he wouldn’t be told.”

He grinned again.

“Nobody can tell Andrew anything,” he said. “He’s as likely to fight a duel with anyone who tries.”

James had seen some of Andrew’s correspondence before, voluminous, irate, and eloquently phrased. He felt a stirring in his soul, a call to something

extravagant, a feeling he had not known since he first saw the land of America from the bow of the ship. This was the challenge he had been seeking, not just of the land, but of the men who inhabited the land. If his customers, frontiersmen, were all as cantankerous as Andrew, and if he could survive, and even win, against them, then he would have reason to be proud of himself. That would be an achievement, and of his own making, of his own doing.

“He’s a good customer,” he said. “We’ll do well by him.”

“Let’s go!” Washington yelled, dancing about the room, shadowboxing an imaginary Andrew.

They laughed, and drank a toast to the new venture. It was three months before they were ready to leave, but those weeks flew by in a welter of preparation and planning.

“And watch out for yourselves,” Uncle Henry cautioned them, as they were ready to leave. “There’s Injuns there.”

Washington whooped, and James tingled with excitement, In all his time in Philadelphia, he had not seen an Indian. There were a few half-breeds, shabby, dispirited men mostly, often drunk, and with vacant eyes, as if they were looking for something they had lost.

But they were not the real thing to James. They were not

the warriors of the legends. Soon he would see them, the noble red-skinned savages on line horses, naked but for paint and brilliant feathers.

Soon he would know the real America.

Soon he would be a true pioneer.

It was so close. Just a few hundred miles away. Just on the other side of the mountains.

48

The simple thrill of being on the road kept their spirits up for the first few days, and Washington took unalloyed delight in everything he saw. It amused James to be guide to his younger brother on their journey of exploration, for he knew the way, at least as far as Baltimore. They stayed with their brothers Hugh and Alexander, who were doing well in business, and organized the supplies to be delivered, at appropriate intervals, to them in Nashville.

"Land," Hugh told them. "Buy every scrap of land you can, be agents for others' purchases, accept land as guarantee for credit, but get yourselves into land as fast as you can."

From Baltimore, they were in virgin territory for both of them, but the road was well traveled by others, and they headed inland, to the new capital, at Washington. 'Me days were warm and sunny, the villages they passed through charming, and they spent the night in an inn where German was the first language. They arrived at their destination the following afternoon, and Washington laughed out loud when he saw the capital, a small village in the middle of a swamp with a few extravagant buildings rising out of the marsh. There were no rooms to be had at any of the few inns, so they slept in their wagon, delighted in the fireflies in the bushes, which they had never seen, and were attacked by mosquitoes all night long. They played sightseers for a day, gawking at everything, and stood outside the presidential mansion for half an hour hoping

to see Mr. Jefferson, but he did not appear. They loaded their wagon onto a barge and crossed the Potomac, to Alexandria, and suddenly found themselves in another country.

They could not define why Virginia was different at first, but quickly realized it was because of the slaves. There was nothing else odd or unusual-Alexandria

was a lovely city, of gracious red-brick buildings, built on a little hill that rose up from the river, but with more black people than they had seen anywhere else.

“Slaves,” Washington whispered in wonder. “They are all slaves. “

They had seen a few slaves in Maryland, which was also a slave state, and a slave ship in Baltimore, but it was empty, as was the auction house, and they felt a little cheated. None of the blacks they saw on the streets there looked any different from those who were free, in Philadelphia, but they knew that here almost every black they saw was in bondage.

They felt cheated again in Alexandria. Everyone, black or white, was simply going about their business, whatever that might be, and they saw nothing to justify the sermons they had heard denouncing the trade.

Still, there was something different, some different manner or attitude between the faces, or perhaps it was only a different accent, or perhaps it was simply that they knew they had crossed an invisible line, and were now in unknown territory, where the rules were changed.

They found an inn for the night, and talked freely between themselves about the slaves they had seen, who were not in any way remarkable, until they realized that no one else, in conversation, ever used the word slave. Darkies, nigras, niggers occasionally, if women were not present, or simply our people, but never slaves. They knew the servants at the inn must be slaves, but they seemed no different from servants on the Northern side, and the owners treated them no better or no worse than servants were treated in the grander houses in Dublin. Again, they were disappointed that the country they were in, which was exotic, was not exotic enough. James thought it was rather like going from Dublin to Liverpool: The accents and manners were different, and the laws, and you realized you were in a foreign country, but everything else was much the same.

The following morning, as they were loading their wagon, they saw something

that jolted them.

A young black man was staggering down the street carrying a large box of something, and could hardly see over the top of it. Walking directly toward him were a couple of welldressed white businessmen, deep in conversation.

They were on a collision course with the black youth, who, peering over his burden, saw them in time and, at the last possible moment, swerved out of the way. But a comer of the box clipped the arm of one of the whites.

Without breaking his stride, or even seeming to look at what he was doing, the white man raised his cane and smashed it on the black youth's shoulders. The youth fell to the ground, and there was an awful crash of breaking glass inside the box he was delivering. The two white men walked on, and the black youth, after catching his breath, picked up his box and staggered on. He was weeping, but whether it was from the pain of the blow or because of the damage to his cargo, James and Washington could not tell.

No one paid any attention to the incident but themselves. They said nothing to each other, but climbed into the wagon, flicked the horses, and drove away.

They rode in silence for a while, each trying to come to terms with what he had seen, until Washington spoke.

" I've seen as bad or worse in Dublin," he said. "The British treated the croppies no better."

James nodded, for he had seen worse, but the incident soured their pleasure in their travels, until the countryside, the loveliest they had ever seen, worked some magic on them, and they thought themselves in Arcady. They rode through arbors of walnut and oak that bordered pretty farms, where horses grazed on flawless grass. The farmhouses were neat and ordered and painted white, and babbling streams and creeks called runs-Four Mile Run, Holmes Run, and Bull Runfed into lazy rivers.

As the days passed by, they had the sense that they were climbing upward, higher into the mountains, and daily the scenery became more beautiful-grand but placid and peaceful. They saw snakes sunning themselves on the roads, but they slithered away when they heard the wagon. They heard birdsong that was beautiful, and saw squirrels and deer and

possum. They learned to be careful when they had to go into the bushes, because of a nasty little creature called a chigger, an insect that burrowed into skin and itched like blazes. Kindly innkeepers gave them a cure for it, a pungent oil based on turpentine, and everywhere they stayed they were treated with extraordinary civility, and a lazy, casual courtesy that was overtly friendly, yet curiously reserved.

They never talked about slavery again, did not discuss it even between themselves, but came to accept the practice as the tradition in this part of the world. They did not see anything they considered as unfair or harsh treatment of the blacks, but their standards had adjusted since Alexandria, and things that might once have set their teeth on edge became an accepted fact of life.

Each town or village they came to seemed prettier than the one before.

Almost always there was a well-tended square, surrounded by churches with spires and lovely, white-painted houses, but after Charlottesville the villages became less ordered, less formal, newer in construction, and with an increasing abundance of log cabins.

They crossed a small mountain range, and gasped at the splendor of the valley that lay before them that was called Shenandoah, and found themselves in another country again, a different and exciting country, for if eastern Virginia had been Arcady, then this, surely, was Eden.

Their most extravagant dreams came true. They climbed the mountain range on the other side of the vast valley, and the people were rougher, if still as hospitable, and pleased to see the strangers, and desperate for news of the outside world. They had a sense of wilderness only recently tamed, and while they saw many farms, they also saw true pioneers, clusters of families who lived in log cabins, miles, it seemed, from anywhere, even their nearest neighbors. Then they would come to a small town, and the wilderness would recede for a while, only to open up before them again as they traveled on.

In the evenings they heard fiddlers more frenetic than any they had known in Ireland, and drank a clear white liquor called moonshine-for it was made by the

light of the moonthat had the kick of a mule and produced a wondrous, dreaming drunkenness. They saw a revival meeting, the preacher on a wagon outside a church, practicing a brand of Christianity

that provoked his congregation of simple hardy souls to an ecstatic fervor that was moving and slightly frightening.

Sometimes they saw a few Indians, still not the naked, noble savage, painted and feathered, but a far cry from the drunken half-breeds of the city, Calm and self-possessed, they came to the little villages or simple trading posts to sell soft animal hides, or fish they had caught in the river, or trinkets of beads, and took in return the supplies they needed instead of money.

They came down from the mountains through stands of magnificent pine or cedar, past gushing waterfalls and some small mountains that were perpetually shrouded in a mist that looked smoky. Now they came to rolling gentle hills, of grass so sweet that in the distance it looked blue. Up again into the hills, through woods that slowly gave way to fanns, and they saw fields of cotton and wondered at it, and played with some bolls of it, although they got prickles in their fingers. The weather was hot but it suited the land, and they saw slave gangs out picking the cotton, chanting work songs as they picked, and they thought it idyllic. Even the overseer flicking his whip occasionally, lazily, at the blacks, appeared to them to be a necessary functionary. They came to a river running through a deep gorge and were told it was called the Cumberland, and that they were close to their journey's end.

After thirty-five days of traveling, they arrived in the thriving settlement of Nashville. Dirty, disheveled, and unshaven, skins browned and necks reddened by the sun, they beamed in delight for they had arrived almost at the edge of the world, and were happier than they could possibly have imagined.

As far as James was concerned, Nashville was America, and the rest of the country could go hang. From the moment they rode into the town, he was so captivated by its simple vigor and pleasant aspect, its sense of isolation and independence,

that he could not imagine he would ever want to live anywhere else. It was Tennessee's oldest town, but established almost within the span of his own lifetime, so that he could feel part of its growth, and would be able to tell his children that he had been there from the beginning. It was a thriving community, with half a dozen brick houses already replacing the log cabins, and another hundred dwellings of clapboard. There were a dozen small shops and stores, which drew their supplies, as James and Washington would do, from Philadelphia and Baltimore to the east, and New Orleans to the south. The local cotton farmers sent their crop to those same cities, for export to Europe.

The land around Nashville had been settled by an early pioneer, John Donelson, who had made a treaty with the Indian tribes, Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw. To the south and southeast were immense tracts of Indian land, mostly Cherokee in Tennessee and Creek in Alabama, which were sacred to their traditional owners, and exempt from white settlement.

Constant encroachments were made onto this land in violation of the treaties, and then the Indians retaliated. The Tennessee Militia, now under the command of Andrew Jackson, would trounce the raiding parties, and the usual result was that more Indian land would be ceded to whites. For the most part, the Indians near Nashville who lived on white man's land dwelt in uneasy alliance with their conquerors, but resentment simmered among the younger men, the braves.

In the early days, the main route south from Nashville had been the river, which connected briefly with the Ohio and then flowed into the mighty Mississippi, and down into Louisiana. There was still considerable river traffic, but a new road, the Natchez Trace, a mere remnant of an old Indian path, led from Nashville, twisting and turning through the forests and beside the gorges, skimpy wooden bridges fording the streams, to Natchez.

With the influx of settlers and merchants and speculators, the path became

broader and well traveled, linking Philadelphia to New Orleans, a distance of two thousand miles.

There was a plentiful water supply from the Cumberland River, good rain, sharp, snowy winters, and high, hot summers. A printing office published a weekly newspaper. There

was no hotel or inn as yet, no industry of any kind, and the ambience of the town was pastoral, uncluttered by machinery or factory.

Of the many settlers who had come to the district, to stay and farm, or move on in search of that elusive, ultimate, perfect pasture, many had prospered mightily. Land was abundant and cheap, and fortunes had been quickly made by some. Not all had been so lucky. The adventurers and speculators, the entrepreneurs and the farseeing, had taken the best of the land, and those less fortunate immigrants who had stayed had found what few acres they could on less productive soil. Dour, hardy, weatherbeaten folk, worn out by wandering, had pitched tents on rocky plots which could be had for a cent an acre, or squatted on Indian borders. They scratched out an existence raising tobacco or corn, and, the women more fertile than the land, swarms of children. Many of these children did not live beyond their first few months or years, and those who did were condemned to a life at least as harsh as their parents', unless they got lucky, or moved on.

West, always west. It was the anthem of the frontier. Somewhere out west was the elusive crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, and few looked back to the East, or to Europe, for what they had now, no matter how little, or how much, was almost always more than what they had left behind.

These white poor gave spice to James's appreciation of his new environment, for without the less lucky, how could the fortunate appreciate what they had achieved? While he believed that all men were created equal, and believed in equal opportunity, he did not believe in a leveled society, with no rich and no poor. It was the duty of the strong to protect the weak, but not to become weak

themselves.

The population of the town was cosmopolitan, reflecting America. English and Scottish and Irish and Welsh, German, Huguenot, and Scandinavian, and a few from the Caribbean Islands. There were blacks-a few free tradesmen, and enslaved laborers. Some Indians, like the Cherokee chief Doublehead, had adapted to the white man's ways, and had successful farms. Others lived in the forest, tribally, in small communities, some in log cabins, some in wigwams or tepees.

Already there were settlers in the neighboring, less peaceful, territory of Missouri, and some had gone farther west, and crossed the Sabine River, into the Mexican province of Texas.

Nashville was the crossroads, and James was wise enough to understand that fortunes can be made more easily at crossroads than at destinations.

James and Washington found a boardinghouse and settled in. Their letters of introduction served them well, and they were welcomed to the community.

Being Irish was no disadvantage here; it was sufficient, they quickly discovered, that they were white gentlemen. The manners and modes of the town were no different from any other they had known, if more open and informal, though both James and Washington were amused that almost all white men, rich or poor, had constant dribbles on their chins, from chewing tobacco. James never took to the practice. The few free blacks were regarded dubiously by the majority of whites, if not with open hostility, and the slaves were a simple fact of life, harshly treated or otherwise, depending on the whim of their Massas. The Indians, of whatever tribe, were mostly shunned and avoided, and half-breeds despised, even by other Indians.

Within two weeks, James and Washington had found, and arranged to buy, a

spacious wooden store in the main street. Washington had his portion from his father and was ready to pay cash. James had wrestled with his conscience. Ultimately, not wanting to be indebted to a bank or his younger brother, he used his own portion that he had vowed he would never touch. He justified the breaking of this oath by his need for a start in life.

Their supplies began arriving by flat-bottomed barge from Philadelphia and Baltimore, and soon their shelves were stacked with clothing and cloth-calico, linen, wool, and woven cotton-hats and boots, cases of candles, tins of tobacco, bags of loose coffee and tea, flour and oatmeal, dry beans and maize, crockery and cutlery, pots and pans, and racks and spades and hoes. Even before the shop opened, they had begun business, making contact with the farmers who dealt with their brothers in the East, offering their services in any and every capacity, as mailmen and post office, as agents and suppliers,

and as accountants and bookkeepers. They preferred cash money, specie, as their payment, but were prepared to take signed notes or paper; they offered credit, provided there was collateral, they would even barter, and they accepted deeds to land, the common currency of the frontier.

They hung up their shingle, JACKSON BROTHERS, DRY GOODS, and on the day the store was ready, they looked at each other, both in serviceable trousers, with blousy shirts and clean linen aprons, shook hands, wished each other good luck, and opened their door.

They did better than they had hoped and were busier than they could have imagined. At the end of the first day, they knew they needed some help, if only an errand boy, to run messages, clean the store, and load wagons. They put a sign in the window, confidently expecting a number of applications from the poor white boys in the district, keen to earn pocket money, but to their surprise, no one came for the job. Had they been more attuned to the town and the times, they might have noticed that some of their customers looked at the sign suspiciously, but they were new to the district, and naive.

James ran the store on his own, for Washington was always out making deliveries in the wagon. He was toying with putting an advertisement for the job in the local newspaper, when the door burst open, and an angry white man came in. He snatched the job advertisement from the door and marched to the counter, interrupting two women who were debating the merits of different brands of linseed oil with James.

“What is the meaning of this?” he demanded.

James was irritated, and glared at the intruder. A tall, lanky man, with a shock of unruly red hair and startling, sapphire eyes that were dancing with anger. A slender, welldressed black man had followed him into the store, and stood behind him, Ue a shadow.

The ferocity of the man’s approach unnerved James. The two women drifted away to inspect bags of white beans.

“I need a boy for the store,” James said. “To run errands, and keep the place clean-”

“Nigger work,” the man shouted, interrupting James. He

turned to his shadow. “Nigger work, eh, Alfred?”

The shadow nodded, and his Massa turned back to James.

“No decent white boy would do this.”

James’s temper was rising.

“But I need help, and I’d pay well,” he said, with an edge in his voice.

The man laughed, and James wondered what was so funny.

“Then get a nigger,” he said.

“I don’t know how,” James countered. “None have applied.”

The man laughed again, and the shadow chuckled. “Nigger boys don’t apply for jobs; they don’t have a choice in the matter. You buy ‘em.”

James felt foolish now. The concept of owning slaves was no longer shocking or exotic to him, but he had never imagined he would have the need to purchase one. He was not sure he wanted to own a slave.

An image popped into his mind of a welldressed woman in Liverpool leading a beautifully attired Nubian boy, on a silver chain. The boy had not seemed unhappy.

“How?” was the best he could manage.

The man’s anger had dissipated, and he looked at James almost pityingly, and shook his head.

“I thought your brothers would have equipped you better for the frontier.”

It dawned on James who he was. Some cadence in his speech matched the phrases he had read in irate letters.

“Mr. Jackson?” he wondered, and Andrew laughed, and shook his hand.

“Andrew will do,” he said. “And you’re the greenhorn. James or Washington?”

“James,” James murmured, feeling very like an errant boy before his father.

“Well, James,” Andrew said. “You’ve already set a few tongues wagging in Nashville with this advertisement, Everyone took pity on you because you are new, but no one had the guts to tell you. Except me.”

He tapped the advertisement on the counter.

“We’ll find you a boy.”

He turned to his shadow. “See to it, Alfred. Get him a good un, but not too pricey. We may have one at the farm.

“Yes, suh, Massa,” the shadow, Alfred, murmured.

Andrew turned back to James.

“Irish,” he barked. “Horses?”

James didn’t understand the question.

“Horseracing!” Andrew snapped impatiently. “Are you a gambling man?”

“Some,” James admitted. The truculent manner of his visitor was annoying him again. He wanted to say something to put him in his place, but was already slightly in awe of him.

“My father bred steeplechasers,” he said, with a tinge of pride. “Crazy Jane, among others.”

Andrew nodded in appreciation, and James was surprised again, for he could not imagine that anyone here had heard of his father’s prize mare.

-We’ll make a frontiersman of you yet,” he said. “Though I trust your prices will be more reasonable than your thieving brothers’.”

He was already on his way out of the store, and James’s temper snapped.

., my brothers are not thieves,” he cried. “And nor am I.-

Andrew stopped and turned back, and gave James his most dazzling smile.

The effect of that smile, impudent, confident, embracing, and reassuring, was remarkable. James thought he had survived a test of fire, and had triumphed and been included in the company of a god.

“Well, we shall see,” Andrew said. He tipped his hat to the women who were still twittering about beans and swept out of the store. Alfred followed him, as closely as his shadow.

After he had gone, James looked at his hands, which were shaking slightly, but he was well satisfied with the meeting. He sold the women what they wanted, then, having no other customers, set to and swept the store.

At dinner that night he told Washington about Andrew, and, cautiously, suggested that they might soon own a slave. Washington raised his eyebrows in surprise, but listened to James's justifications.

"I'd rather the poor beggar was with us," Washington said, than stuck in the fields like his brothers. I have seen terrible things done to them."

Washington, on his journeys of delivery, had seen much more of the actual workings of slave life than James. He had seen blacks flogged for minor misdemeanors, and it had shocked him at first, and repulsed him. But he was getting used to it.

"And it is the way of things," he said.

They agreed they would be kind to their slave, if he turned up, and never raise their hand to him in anger. They made a room ready in the basement, with a small bunk and some blankets, like getting a kennel ready for a new and costly dog, and wondered what he would eat. They took their own meals at the tavern across the road, and remembered there was provision for the feeding of slaves, in the kitchen.

Alfred came back the following morning, before Washington set off on his rounds. He had a small black boy with him, of eight or nine years old.

He tipped his hat to James and Washington.

"Massa," he said. "This here be Ephraim."

Ephraim was thin and scrawny, simply dressed and barefooted. He kept his eyes to the floor.

Alfred bent down and spoke to him.

“This yo’ new Massas,” he said. “Be a good boy, an’ allus do what you tol’.”

Ephraim nodded without looking up. Washington went to him.

“Well, now, Ephraim,” he said. “I’m Massa Washington, and that’s Massa James.”

He waited a moment.

“Do you understand?”

Ephraim nodded.

“What is my name?” Washington asked him.

“Mass’ Wash’n’ton,” Ephraim murmured.

“Very good,” Washington said. “And that man?”

“Mass’ James,” Ephraim whispered.

“Excellent,” Washington said, and put his arm around the boy’s shoulders.

Ephraim stiffened.

“There’s no need to be frightened of me,” Washington told him. “I’m not going to beat you.”

Ephraim nodded, but didn’t seem convinced.

“Are you hungry?” Washington asked him.

Are you hungry?" Washington asked him.

"Chile bin fed," Alfred said, but Ephraim looked up at Washington with large and sorrowful eyes. He had been well fed that morning, but he was always hungry.

Washington smiled. The effect of his smile on Ephraim was similar to the effect of Andrew's smile on James the previous day. He looked at Washington adoringly and nodded his head.

"I's allus hungry," he said.

"Thought so," Washington said cheerily. "I am too. Why don't you and I find some bread and cheese and get to know each other. -

He led Ephraim to the back of the store, found some fresh bread and a lump of hard cheese, and the two sat together, munching happily, while Washington told Ephraim what was expected of him.

Alfred came to James, and put some papers on the counter.

"Sign here, Massa," he instructed James.

James signed where he indicated. It was official. He owned a slave.

"Dat a hunerd dollar you owe Massa Andrew," he said. "But he take it in kind."

He tipped his hat, and left the store. James went to join Washington and Ephraim.

"He's a good lad," Washington told James. "His family should be proud of him."

"Where is your mother, Ephraim?" he asked the little slave, who looked at the floor again, because he didn't understand the question.

"Yo' mammy.- Washington had already picked up a few words of the slaves'

dialect. "Where is she?"

-Wi’ Massa Jackson,” Ephraim whispered. There was a tear in his eye. This big white man might be quite friendly, but he was his Massa, and Massas could turn on nigger boys at any moment. And he missed his mammy.

Although he had only been parted from her that morning, he did not expect to see her again.

“Well, I’ll take you with me sometimes, when I go to visit

Massa Jackson’s farm,” Washington told him, for he missed his mother. “And you can see your mammy.-

Ephraim looked at him again, as if he couldn’t quite believe his ears, or his luck,

“Now, let’s go and took at your room,” Washington said, and led Ephraim away.

James stayed in the store, beset by two conflicting emotions. He was quite proud of the fact that he now owned a slave, of some value. He was becoming a man of property and substance.

But he was also ashamed. It had not occured to him that Ephraim might miss his mammy. Or even that he had one.

10

After Ephraim it was easy, almost as easy as making money, which flowed to them in a steady stream at first, but then in a raging torrent.

They bought a house, and because they needed a cook and housekeeper, Alfred found them Tiara, a young, outspoken girl who cost four hundred dollars.

They decided to expand the small stable at the back of the store into a livery stable, and they needed hostlers, so Alfred found them Micah, a sturdy young man who was good with horses. Micah cost six hundred dollars.

When Tiara and Micah got much too close to each other and had a son, James discovered that he owned a healthy baby boy who hadn't cost him anything at all and was worth, on the day of his birth, fifty dollars, and who appreciated in value with each passing year. Tiara and Micah jumped over the broom, a slave custom, into the land of matrimony, and had several more children, all of whom belonged to James, who had never attended a slave auction.

The store did well, and they used that and the house they owned as collateral to buy some undeveloped lots on the out-

skirts of town. Within a year they sold three of them at a handsome profit. With that money they purchased lot #177, on which a cotton gin had been erected, and began processing much of the cotton from the district.

Washington, filled with wanderlust and the adventure of the frontier, explored farther south, to Natchez, which had been a Spanish town, and bought several lots near there. After the Purchase and Louisiana's later admission to the Union, settlement in the area flourished. Washington sold his land and tripled his money. He bought more land, cheaper land, farther from the town, and within a year sold that and bought more.

James and Washington had early on decided that, unlike most stores in Nashville, theirs would serve Indians. They were not to be allowed in while whites were shopping, but came in the evening, when the store was closed to others. If they wanted to make purchases during the day, they would come to the back, and Micah or Ephraim would relay their needs to James.

The Indians were keenly aware of local opinion and attitudes toward them,

and just as aware of, and keenly grateful for, James's lack of that attitude. James was fascinated by them. He saw little to fear in them, and could not equate the countless stories of bloodthirsty savages with these reserved and downcast people who were struggling to survive in a world that was alien to them. They in turn respected his confidence, and he was befriended by Jimmy Doublehedd, and his father, the Cherokee chief, Doublehead.

Chief Doublehead was old, and seldom smiled. In his youth he had been a fierce warrior, but after countless, fruitless battles against the whites, he had come to believe that his nation could not win against such overwhelming, constantly renewing, numbers of white men, who were better armed and better trained. He sought peace, as being in the best interest of his people.

He bent his efforts toward a harmonious accommodation between the races, and the whites came to regard him as the man who tried to civilize his people, He ceded and sold land to the whites. He opened a trading post, and supervised appreciable commerce. He adopted the white man's ways of agriculture, established a plantation, and owned several black slaves.

A scandal erupted when Doublehead ceded by treaty a large territory of land to the south, between Nashville and Huntsville, The Chickasaw claimed it was their land and outside of Doublehead's jurisdiction. A small war ensued, which both Indian tribes lost. Younger braves of his tribe rebelled, and accused Doublehead of surrendering to the white man.

Chief Doublehead's reputation among the tribes was shattered.

He found it impossible to smile anymore, because there was nothing to smile about. Only his son, Jimmy, defended him.

Council was called, and one by one the young braves voiced their grievances against Doublehead, the U.S. government, and all white men.

Doublehead listened in silence, and hardly moved, except to restrain his angry

son, Jimmy. It was council, and all were entitled to their say.

Bonepolisher, a sturdy Cherokee brave, made a long speech accusing Doublehead of infamy to his own tribe, and of making secret treaties with the white men, to benefit himself.

Doublehead heard him out, but his anger was rising.

"You have betrayed the people, your brothers! " Bonepolisher cried. It was the greatest sin an Indian could be accused of by his own people.

Doublehead got to his feet.

"You have said enough, Bonepolisher," Doublehead said, in a voice of thunder. "Stop, or I shall kill you."

In fury, Bonepolisher grabbed his tomahawk and raised it to strike Doublehead, who shot him through the heart.

The council adjourned in anger and confusion. Later that evening, Doublehead was sitting in a tavern with his son.

"It is a good day to die," Doublehead told Jimmy. And sent his son away from him.

Three men came in, Chief Ridge, a half-breed, Alex Saunders, and a white trader named Rogers. Doublehead stared at Rogers in contempt.

"You are not of our people," Doublehead said to the white man. "You live among us by our permission. I have never seen you in council or on the warpath. Go away, and do not bother me."

Rogers laughed.

Believing that his end was near, and perhaps wanting to hasten it, Doublehead struck the white trader. A fight devel-

oped, and others came to Doublehead's assistance, and shots were fired.

The assailants fled into the night, but Doublehead's jaw was shattered by a bullet. A friend helped Doublehead down the street to seek help, but the assailants came out of hiding and attacked again. Doublehead fought like a panther, but was killed by a tomahawk blow to his skull.

In fear of his own life, Jimmy came to James, thinking he would be safe with a white man, and poured out his grief. James comforted him, and told him that if there was ever anything he could do for Jimmy and his family, in honor of the chief, he had only to ask.

The merchant James Jackson, who had been kind to the Indian people, was one of the few white men allowed to attend the funeral of the once great chief, who was buried according to the tribal ways.

James was fascinated by the intricate, exotic ceremonies, and found himself wondering about the relationship between man and the spirit world. These people did not believe in his God, but they believed in some powerful metaphysical force that caused awe in James. He thought that Chief Doublehead's personal dilemma exemplified the tragedy of all his people, of all the tribes. In order to live in peace with the white men, they had to surrender to them, because they could not win against them in war. Their land, pristine, primeval, was too valuable to be left to their stewardship, for it was unproductive. The march of progress could not be stopped, yet, surely, in this vast country, there was land enough for all? James approved of the concept behind the treaties, whereby the Indians gave land for white settlement in return for the right to live in peace on what was left, and he cursed those whites who coveted what the Indians still had. When he saw the wonderful, empty landscapes on which the Creek and Cherokee and Chickasaw still roamed, he envied them their freedom, and thought it was a sweet and simple life to live as they did, taking from the land only what could be replenished, living from the land that gave to them in abundance.

At the same time, in his darker moments, he knew how much money he could make if he could persuade them to part with some few acres of it. He cherished the idea that perhaps he could wrest a private treaty from Chief Doublehead, as

others had done, and make that land available to settlers on a legal basis, and be rich beyond imagining.

When wealth did come to James, it was indeed from land, but not quite as he expected. Successful as James and Washington were in all their endeavors, the real money came to them when Thomas Jefferson, the president, put an embargo on all shipping from United States ports., “Tom’s gone mad!” Andrew cried, and railed and fumed, and swore it would bankrupt the country, which it very nearly did. James only vaguely understood why Jefferson had taken this action, but thrilled to be friends with a man who called the president Tom.

As James understood it, Britain, at war with France, had put an embargo on American ships sailing to European ports, and Napoleon retaliated by putting an embargo on American ships sailing to British ports. Jefferson put an embargo on all American shipping, to try to bring the two warring factions to reason with regard to neutral American commerce.

“Cutting off his nose to sprite his face,” Andrew cried again, stomping on the floor in rage.

The effect of the embargo was catastrophic. Some smart companies and ship’s captains found their way around it by using ports in the Caribbean, but few goods came into America, and fewer left. The dormant secession movement in New England woke up sharply, because theirs were the ports most harshly affected, but Southern cotton growers, and those around Nashville, suffered as well. They could not get their cotton to British markets.

The farmers lived in hope that the embargo would be repealed, and tried to continue to pay their debts. Cash money was scarce and promissory notes abounded.

” Danmed paper!” Andrew cried again. “It will be the ruin of us. Hard

currency is the only honorable money!”

James and Washington obliged their customers to the limit of their financial ability, which was now considerable. When all else failed, they accepted land in payment of debts, and by the time the embargo was lifted they owned over fifty thousand acres. With the resumption of trade, the price of land rocketed to the sky. James and Washington sold half of what

they owned at formidable profit, and bought yet more.

Washington was drawn more and more to the South, to Natchez. He loved the lazy, unhurried river life, and bought some barges to carry cargo between Natchez and New Orleans.

James’s passion became a farm he had accumulated outside Nashville. It was the first estate he had ever owned, and he enjoyed the role of country squire. He gave soirees and picnics, and entertained the notables of the town. A frequent visitor to Andrew’s house, he became involved in the politics of the South, and of the frontier, and met several of the rising young politicians of the day, Henry Clay and his son Henry junior from Kentucky, John McKinley from Tennessee, and John Coffee, a military man, and Andrew’s aide. John Coffee and Andrew owned the Cloverbottorn Horse Race Track, and James and Andrew, the two Jacksons as they were called, were always to be seen at the meetings. Both men loved the sport, and Andrew owned several blooded horses.

“You will never amount to anything.”

His father’s last words to him were the fuel to the engine of James’s ambition, and yet he could never convince himself that he had achieved enough to prove his father wrong.

. Thus James became one of the landholding gentry, though still in trade, the owner of a small cotton plantation, a cotton gin, a successful business, a breeder of racehorses, and Massa to more than forty slaves.

He had never attended a slave auction, nor had he ever sent one of his slaves to the block

the block.

Family gathered to him as rapidly as money. After his sister Martha died, Eleanor came from Ireland with her second husband, Thomas Kirkman, and their children, Mary Letitia, James, and little Tom, together with Martha's two girls, Mary and Anna. Thomas had an astute mind for commerce, and James put him in charge of the store. Sara and Jimmy came with their four children, Mary Ann, Jane, Robert, and Ellen. James employed Jimmy in his land office. Shortly after arriving in Nashville, Sara gave birth to a girl, who was called Letitia, in honor of Hugh's wife, in Baltimore.

Surrounded by loving family, rich and successful, still young enough and handsome enough, James had almost all his heart desired, except two things. He had no shadow, no personal manservant, as Andrew had Alfred, and he had never found a woman to love.

The first was easy. He discussed his need with Andrew, and Andrew sent Alfred looking. It took a year, but finally Alfred found a winner.

Cap'n Jack was in his early twenties when he came to James. His previous Massa, in Virginia, had seen the potential in him, and had taken the youthful slave, Jack, into the house, and trained him as a manservant. He also taught Cap'n Jack to read and write, which was unusual among slaves, and forbidden in some states. Cap'n Jack took full advantage of the benefits that had come to him, worked hard and well, and made himself indispensable to his Massa, who was old and infirm. He had a habit of calling everyone "Cap'n" because he could not bear to use the word "Massa," which accentuated his slave status, and eventually became known as Cap'n Jack himself. Andrew Jackson was a frequent visitor to the estate, on his many trips to Washington on government business, and Alfred and Cap'n Jack became friends. When Cap'n Jack's Massa became mortally ill, Alfred suggested to Andrew that he buy Cap'n Jack on James's behalf.

Despite the fact that this almost certainly saved Cap'n Jack from the auction block, he seethed with resentment about this change in his ownership. He wanted to stay and nurse his old Massa. He didn't want to be uprooted from the only home he had known, in pleasant Virginia, and be carted off to the frontier to a man he didn't know. Besides, he cherished the hope that his Massa would free him in his will. This was not to be. Although the old man was fond of Cap'n Jack, he did not believe in the practice of freeing niggers, no matter how loyal they had been.

"It the block, or the backblocks," Alfred told him with a wheezy chuckle.

Cap'n Jack was forced to admit that his dream of freedom had been false, and having no alternative, he accompanied Alfred and Andrew to his new Massa, but went with bad grace,

For the first few weeks it was a disaster. Cap'n Jack did as he was told by James, but with ill humor, and never extended himself. To reinforce his bitterness at his status, Cap'n Jack stopped calling white men "Cap'n," and called James "Massa," with scarcely concealed contempt. It made James

angry. He had paid a thousand dollars for Cap'n Jack, and hoped for a servant as loyal and obliging and inventive as Alfred was to Andrew, not this surly, if competent, man, who never questioned anything, and never took any initiative.

He lost his temper with Cap'n Jack, and threatened to sell him, but Cap'n Jack only shrugged.

"If'n that make you happy, Massa," he said. "To buy an' sell niggers."

That made James angrier, because Cap'n Jack had touched his conscience.

James was still ambivalent in his attitude to slavery. He had acquired slaves because it was the done thing, because it was expected of him, and because only slaves performed certain jobs. It was also true that he enjoyed the status that

having so many slaves gave him. He believed himself to be a benevolent Massa, he never went to an auction or sold slaves away, and, for the most part, he treated his slaves well. His lenience had declined over time. He allowed his foreman on the plantation to use the lash mildly, or some of the children to be chastised with the switch, but he persuaded himself that his slaves were better looked after than any in the district. Ephraim, and Tiara and Micah's boys were almost like sons to him.

He lived in the South and slavery was the way of the South. He had not made his fortune on their sweat and labor, but by his own sharp brain and endeavors. He thought his slaves responded well to his treatment of them.

They seemed loyal, and obedient, and none had ever run away. There were some dissenters, a couple of troublesome young men on the plantation, but James put this down to intemperate youth, and a few stinging lashes from the foreman's whip soon brought them to heel.

Still, the practice troubled him, although less and less as the numbers of those he owned grew larger, and he knew them less well, and was less involved in their lives. He calmed his conscience by telling himself that slavery was best for these people, who were illiterate and not able to survive in the white man's world, but most of the time he tried to avoid thinking about slavery, or freedom, as an issue.

Cap'n Jack was the living proof that he had compromised some of his ideals, and that made him angry. He discussed the problem with Washington, when his brother passed through

Nashville on his way home to Ireland, for a visit to the old country.

Washington had no problem with slavery. He owned a number of slaves in Natchez, who operated his fleet of barges between that city and New Orleans. A natural leader of men, a natural authority figure, but with chann and good humor, Washington kept his slaves well disciplined, but although he tolerated harsh punishment, he enjoyed finding less extreme ways of solving problems.

"Don't get mad" he told James with a laugh. "Get Irish"

"Don´t get mad,´´ he told James with a laugh. "Get Irish.´´

James got Irish. He called Cap'n Jack to his study one night, ordered him to sit, and produced a bottle of good whiskey. He poured drinks for both of them, and asked Cap'n Jack to explain his problem.

Cap'n Jack couldn't believe this was happening.. Slaves were discouraged from drinking liquor-often it was forbidden to them-and no one, not even his first, much-loved Massa, had ever asked him what he felt. What he thought, yes, but never what he felt.

Sullen at first, he sipped on the whiskey, and felt the fire race through him. He didn't know how to say all the things that raged in his heart, but the liquor released his tongue.

"I ain't free," he blurted out.

"No, you're not," James agreed calmly. "You're my slave. "

"An' what gives you the fight to own me?" Cap'n Jack retorted. He was astonished at himself. Such audacity would surely get him flogged tomorrow, but it was done now. In for a penny, in for a pound. He was going to be punished anyway; he might as well make the most of his crime.

"I don't know," James replied, honestly. "But it is the way of it."

"Then the way is wrong," Cap'n Jack insisted. He gulped on his whiskey again, and suddenly all the distress and bitterness he had accumulated over the years came pouring out of him.

He was treated as an animal, or livestock, but he was not an animal; he could read and write, he could think, and he could feel.

“I think, therefore I am,” James agreed. He poured more whiskey, and asked if Cap’n Jack’s previous Massa had not treated him well.

“He was good to me,” Cap’n Jack was forced to admit. “Like his pet dog, or his best stallion. But he never treated me human.”

“I try to do that,” James said. “But you resent me.”

“Course I do,” Cap’n Jack said. “Coz I ain’t free. All yo’ niggers resent you. Coz you got the power over them.”

It had never occurred to James, nor did he believe it. His people loved him. Even the troublesome few on the plantation were angry because of their work and their lowly conditions, he had thought, but not at him.

He was sure, not at him. But he would investigate what Cap’n Jack told him.

Cap’n Jack fought for words to make him understand, but what words were there? What words could explain to someone who was free, and whose freedom was never in doubt, how precious freedom was? How could he explain what it felt like to be bom in bondage, and know you would never be free of it?

Never be free to choose your own name, and your own life. Never be free to make decisions for yourself-, never be free to travel where vou wanted, to do what you wanted. Never be free of being sold. Never be free of the fear that your wife might be sold away from you, and your children. Never be free to create something of your own, to farm some small few acres, and give it to your son, saying I made this, yo’ pappy made this. Never free to fight for yourself and yours, never free of the fear of unfair punishment, never free from the potential pain of the lash.

Never free to be a man.

“It don’t matter if’n you don’t never whump us,” he said. “It is enough that you have the power to do it.”

His mind exploded at the simple unfairness of it, the Linbelievable injustice that had been done to him and his people, all because they were black. He fought back tears.

“You think we’s proud to be slaves?” Cap’n Jack asked him, his anger nearly spent, and other emotions unsettling him.

James listened to the litany of grief, the sad song in praise

of freedom, and thought of Fortan, the black sailmaker in Philadelphia, who made over a hundred thousand dollars a year, and could look on his life with pride.

He thought of his peasant friends in Ireland, who toiled all their lives for some other man’s benefit, and were prepared to die for a chance of freedom.

He thought of Sean, effectively slave to soil he did not own, and who did lay down his life to be free, and went triumphantly to his grave.

He remembered the shame he felt on the day he bought Ephraim, and did not even think of the boy’s enforced separation from his family. He felt ashamed now, and when he saw that there were tears in his new slave’s eyes, he was distressed.

“What can I do?” James asked.

“Make me free,” Cap’n lack said.

“Why should I do that?” James wondered. “I have paid a great deal of money for you, and you have given me no indication that you deserve your freedom.”

“Did you earn yours?” Cap’n Jack responded. “Or was you bom to it?”

He had gone too far, he was sure. He’d be sent to the block tomorrow, after a hundred lashes at least, but it was almost worth it.

“Yes, I was,” James agreed. “You were not, for that is not the way of it here. But you could earn it.”

Cap’n Jack brushed away the tear from his eye, and looked at him. Was this

the bait they always dangled? His ol' Massa had said it to him so often.

"Work hard for me, Jack, and you could be free."

It had never been a promise, only a carrot, and in the end it had been a lie. A white man's lie, to keep the black man complaisant.

"If you work hard for me, willingly and well, then, when the time is right, I will give you your freedom."

Cap'n Jack didn't believe him. "When?" he asked.

"When you have earned it," James said, and believed it when it was said.

Cap'n Jack turned away. It was the old lie.

"I give you my word," James said quietly, for he had seen the disbelief in Cap'n Jack's eyes.

"I swear it."

What could Cap'n Jack do but believe him? It was his only hope.

The problem of finding a wife was not so easily solved.

There had been several women in James's life, for he cut a dashing figure, and was considered quite a catch, but he had never felt more than passing affection for any of them.

It made Eleanor cross.

"For heaven's sake, Jamie," she chided him. She would never call him James. "You've had quite long enough to sow your wild oats."

James smiled ruefully. He had sown very few wild oats.

“You are a man of substance,” Eleanor continued. “You must have sons. If anything should happen to you, God forbid, what would become of all this?”

James thought it was a cold-blooded reason for getting married and having a family, but he took her point. He looked at his estate. What would become of it all if something happened to him? He resolved to make a new will, in favor of Eleanor’s boys, and Sara’s.

“What are you waiting for?” Eleanor demanded, concerned for her brother.

“I don’t know,” Jaynes shrugged. “Love, I suppose.”

Eleanor gave a small sigh of exasperation.

“Jamie,” she cried. “Be your age.”

James was tired of it. He knew what was expected of him. He wanted to marry; he wanted to raise a family. He loved having all his nieces and nephews around, and wanted his own sons and daughters. But he wanted to fall in love. He wanted to know what it was about love that moved people to do ex-

traordinary things. He wanted to know what it was that the poets wrote about. He wanted to know what it was like to have a heart so full that the loss of the loved one might cause it to break.

“You found love,” he said testily, to Eleanor. “You had Oliver.”

“Yes, I did,” Eleanor agreed. “And what a wild and wonderful time it was.”

She lapsed into pretty memory for a moment, but then shook herself from the past and told James a tiny secret.

“But Thomas is the better husband,” she said softly.

James was shocked. He had always imagined Eleanor and Oliver to be soul mates, a passionate couple whose lives intertwined in events of great moment. He could not imagine how the kind, balding, bespectacled Thomas Kirkman could be a better husband than the dashing, fiery Oliver. But he was grateful for the confidence Eleanor's confession gave him. He longed to be more like Oliver, Sean, or Washington, or especially Andrew, but doubted that he had that much bravado.

He wondered if he was scared of marriage because of his father. He could not countenance the idea that his children would not love him.

Mostly, he envied Andrew Jackson, who had found in his Rachel a marriage that James longed to emulate, and a woman that he adored.

Rachel Jackson was the most extraordinary woman he had ever met, and sometimes when he thought of his dead mother, whom he had never known, James thought of Rachel. She was dark-haired, pious and demure, dedicated to God and Andrew, although not necessarily in that order, and to her sons, who were not her sons.

The tenth of eleven children bom to John Donelson, who had founded Nashville, Rachel had been her father's darling, a vivacious minx of a girl, forever getting into scrapes. When she was thirteen, she had accompanied her parents, her family, and others on an epic river journey from Virginia to Nashville. They traveled a thousand miles, mostly through hostile country. Several of their party were killed by Indians, and some others drowned. Rachel, brown as a berry, fleet as a deer,

survived all the privations with unquenchable good spirits and a tomboy appetite for the adventure. She flourished on the frontier and grew into a stunning beauty, all dimples and laughter, cherry lips and lustrous eyes. She had her pick of suitors, married the handsome Lewis Robards when she was eighteen, and went to live with her new husband on his parents'

estate in Kentucky.

The marriage was a disaster. Lewis was irrationally jealous, and violent toward Rachel when other men paid her attention. He ordered his wife out of the house. She returned to her family in Nashville, lived with her mother, and retired from the world. But not far enough. She took the eye of a dashing young attorney who had come to the district, Andrew Jackson.

A settlement was negotiated with the contrite Lewis Robards, and Rachel returned to her husband. He promptly forgot his contrition, and returned to his earlier, jealous violence. Rachel fled her husband a second time, and her family thought she would be safe from Robards in Natchez. Since she could not undertake the perilous journey through Indian country on her own, Andrew Jackson volunteered to accompany her.

In Natchez they heard that Robards had sued for divorce. They returned to Nashville and were married.

That was the story as they told it. From others, James heard a slightly different version. It was rumored that Andrew had seduced Rachel to elope with him, which James thought possible. That he had offered to fight a duel with Robards, which James thought likely, because Andrew fought more duels than any other man in the country. That Andrew and Rachel had married bigamously in Natchez, before the divorce was final, which James thought unlikely, Andrew was too smart a lawyer for that. Neither Andrew nor Rachel could ever be shaken from their simpler, more innocent version of the tale, but the rumor of bigamous marriage haunted them all their lives. Andrew challenged several men because of it, in defense of his wife’s honor, and killed at least some of them.

The rumors had their strongest effect on Rachel. Because of them, and perhaps to counteract them, she withdrew from public life, and settled for simple happiness with the man she loved. It was hard to see any of the passionate creature she must once have been in the somberly clothed, deep’ly religious

woman who was Rachel now, but sometimes when she talked with James about

woman who was Rachel now, but sometimes when she talked with James about the early days in Nashville, she allowed a little of her old self to show. Her cheeks dimpled, and her eyes sparkled and flashed, and there was a hint of gentle mockery in her voice, as she teased him with hints as to her romantic past.

She adored Andrew, and he her, and their sadness was that they had no children of their own. Sons they had aplenty, orphaned boys of dead relatives, and later Andrew adopted a Creek boy, Lincoyen, and they brought him up as his own. But their darling was Andrew junior, who was the only son they had from infancy.

Rachel's brother Severn and his wife, Elizabeth, had many children, and, after so many, when Elizabeth delivered twin boys, Sevem sent for Rachel and Andrew. Elizabeth told her sister-in-law that they had been amply blessed, while she had not, and she gave Rachel the pick of the four-day-old twins. Rachel chose the littler of the two, and she and Andrew raised the boy with love and tenderness, and called him Andrew, in honor of the man who was his most doting father.

In the early days of their marriage they had lived on Andrew's farm at Hunter's Hill, but with prosperity he bought a new estate, somewhat closer to Nashville, and built a lovely home for them, with landscaped gardens, that he called the Hermitage.

"Soon I shall retire from public life," he told James, "and live here, like a simple hermit, and contemplate the world."

James laughed out loud. Andrew was only fifteen years older than he, and James could not imagine that he would ever retire.

James was a constant and welcome visitor to the Hermitage, and when Andrew was away, as frequently happened, on military expeditions or,affairs in Washington, James would pay particular attention to Rachel, to make sure she was not lonely.

They would sit together for hours in the lovely garden, and Rachel, who cared for James dearly, would talk to him of the past, and instruct him in the pioneer ways, and, like Eleanor, chide him for not being married.

“I can’t get married,” he told her, laughingly. “The woman I love is already spoken for.”

She slapped his hand with her fan, and blushed, and hid behind dimples.

These were among the sweetest days of James’s life.

Cap’n Jack loved these visits too, for it gave him a chance to be with his old friend Alfred. The two slaves would sit together near the vegetable plot, telling yams about their Massas, or gossiping about slave life, or simply sitting, in convivial silence, and dreaming, for a sunny moment, that they were free.

12

Cap’n Jack was determined to keep his side of the bargain with James. He assumed it was unlikely he would be given his freedom at any time in the foreseeable future, but he vowed to give James no reason to deny the promise.

He took charge of his Massa’s life, and became the most diligent of slaves, as Alfred was to Andrew, constantly on guard for his Massa’s welfare. He advised him, with information gathered on the remarkable slave grapevine, as to plots of land that might soon be on the market because of a death in someone’s family, or what farmers might need to sell their cotton early, for need of money. He organized the house niggers, and kept a weather eye on the field hands. He made friends with Micah and Tiara and helped ease Ephraim through his adolescent years.

Because his Massa loved racing he took a keen interest in the track, and

learned about blooded horses.

Easy of manner, quick of mind, he made friends with the trainers and stable hands, and passed any tips he heard along to his Massa. Cap'n Jack was fascinated by the tiny jockeys, almost all black, a few free, most slaves, and became good friends with one in particular, Monkey Simon.

Monkey Simon came from Senegal, in Africa, where a form of horseracing was a traditional sport among the people. He had grown up with horses, and by the time he was twelve, despite his hunchback, he had ridden in several races. He was captured by slave traders, transported to America, and fetched a high price on the block, because good jockeys were highly prized. He was purchased by Archibald Simon, a friend of John Coffee's, and brought to Nashville. He soon made a considerable name for himself, and the crowds adored him, and cheered when he won, which was often. His tiny size, his hunchback, and his riding style of clutching the horse's neck caused people to say that he rode like a monkey.

It was a tradition that newborn slaves, or those from Africa, took their Massa's surname. The jockey from Senegal became known as "Monkey" Simon, and the nickname stayed with him for the rest of his life.

It was Monkey Simon who taught Cap'n Jack about Africa.

For all his education, Cap'n Jack had no knowledge of Africa other than as a large continent in an atlas. His parents had been bom in America, and two of his grandparents were white. Very few of the slaves ever talked about Africa, either because they couldn't remember it or, in the case of the newer arrivals, because they could not speak English, and by the time they had learned it, Africa was only a distant memory.

Monkey Simon was different. He was a quick study at languages, and remembered Senegal very clearly, and loved the country of his birth. On those days when he had run a race and was feeling pleased with himself, he would sit with his horse in the stable, chuckling about his success, and remember his

earlier boyhood triumphs on the track, before he was captured. Cap'n Jack loved to be with him then, because sometimes Monkey Simon would chant the songs of his people, or tell stories of the tribe.

Because of his racing success, many personal foibles were indulged by his Massa, and, a devout Muslim, Monkey Simon was never given pig meat to eat. He prayed to the east five times a day, was scrupulously clean in his personal habits, and could recite long sections from the holy book, which he called the Koran. The aspect of his slavery that distressed him the most was that he would never be able to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, as all good Muslims strove to do, at least once in their lifetime.

He tried to explain to Cap'n Jack what it was like to live in a place where the color of a person's skin didn't matter. Most of the Senegalese were dark, like himself, but not all were jet black. Some had married lighter-skinned traders from other countries, and some, when the big ships came with their sails like clouds, had children by the white men who sailed them. All these offspring were part of the greater community.

No man was judged by the color of his skin.

Cap'n Jack could not imagine such a blessed country. He dreamed of seeing Africa, of living in such a society, and would beg his friend to tell him more. But the nostalgia for his homeland became too painful for Monkey Simon, and instead he took up his banjo and sang songs he had written about the Massas, and the strange ways of the white men and their Missys.

Although racing was a man's sport, it was acceptable for "Missys," white women, to attend the meetings as spectators, and so the Cloverbottorn Race Track became the center of social activity in Nashville. It was here that Andrew introduced James to many of the leading citizens of the town, and the men who would become James's friends, it was here that James had his first encounter

with dueling, some years before he bought Cap'n Jack, and it was here that he met a young widow called Sarah McCullough.

John Coffee, who owned the track, was a big, burly man, who was conservative in all things except his passion for horses and his devotion to Andrew. Something of a feud had developed between Andrew, with his horse Truxton, and Captain Joseph Erwin, with his horse Ploughboy. The horses had been matched in a forfeit race, but Ploughboy went lame, and Erwin paid the forfeit. At a later rematch, Truxton had been injured in training, and both James and John Coffee advised Andrew to withdraw the horse. Andrew would not, because the race had personal relevance for him.

He had been told that Erwin's son-in-law, Charles Dickerson, had made disparaging remarks about Rachel's marital status, repeating the old rumors about bigamy. Having no proof of the slander, Andrew had let it go unchallenged, but he longed to get his revenge on the track.

He went alone into Truxton's stable, nuzzled the horse, looked him in the eye, and spoke to him as he spoke to soldiers. Truxton won the race by sixty yards.

Andrew thought it was the end of the feud, but heard that Dickerson had slandered Rachel again. Eyes bright with rage, he asked John Overton and James to represent him.

James had never been a second in a duel before-had never seen a duel-and it thrilled him to the core. Proud that his new friend had chosen him, but nervous about what to do, he accompanied Overton to call on Dickerson, and they presented Andrew's challenge. It was accepted.

On a warm May morning, James and Overton went by carriage to the Hermitage, and watched Andrew say a tender farewell to Rachel. He did not tell his wife the purpose of his absence, but James was sure that Rachel knew. It was not the first duel that Andrew had fought, nor the first in Rachel's honor.

It had been agreed that the duel would take place in Kentucky, because Tennessee had laws against the practice. They traveled to Harrison's Mills on the Red River. Alfred rode on the box with the coachman.

James marveled at Andrew's calmness. He spent the journey discussing politics, Jefferson, the president, and Aaron Burr, who was to be tried for treason and defended by Henry Clay. James knew a little of the strange story of Burr, and hints that Andrew was somehow involved in his plot to declare the Southwest independent of the United States, but Andrew would not be drawn on the subject. He respected and admired Burr, as a brilliant but wayward politician and a crack shot in a duel, but otherwise he laughed the matter aside.

"Aaron can't be all bad; he killed Hamilton," Andrew said, and teased Overton, who was English. "Personally, I liked Hamilton, but he was a monarchist and all for England. He even tried to persuade George Washington to take a crown."

Andrew's commentaries on the history of the country, the founding of it, and the already legendary figures who had created it were eternally fascinating to James. Andrew had an ability to put everything in perspective, and made James feel as if he were a part of things greater than himself. He began to think he would like to become involved in politics, if only in some small way.

Andrew thought in grander concepts. He was more concerned that Jefferson should take some action against Britain. The British Navy was constantly harrying the American fleet at sea, and had introduced the first of many embargoes against American trade with Europe.

"We must fight England again," he insisted. "I was not old enough to do much good in the last war." He meant the Revolution. "I pray the next comes before I get too old to fight."

That Andrew should be looking to the long-term future at all was astonishing to James, whose mind was filled with thoughts of the coming morning.

They passed a pleasant evening across the Kentucky line. Andrew regaled those at dinner with his thoughts on the state of the world, and no one guessed the true’purpose of these strangers.

James had shared a room with Overton, who fell asleep within moments of getting into bed. James stayed awake, almost until dawn, his mind racing with ideas and forebodings. He could not imagine what it must feel like to go to bed knowing that this might be your last night on earth, but memories of his nights at Gorey Hill, before a battle with the British, came to him. He remembered the fear he felt then, and prayed that he would never know such a feeling again in his life. He wondered what he would do if he was ever challenged to a duel, and did not dare to consider his response.

Alfred woke them and his Massa at five the following moming. James was completely uncertain about what was expected of him.

“Just be there,” Overton told him. “I’ll do all the rest.”

Andrew joined them, and said he was looking forward to a good breakfast, after they had attended to business.

They met at the arranged location, on the bank of the river, just after dawn. It was a pleasant place, a small grove surrounded by poplars, and James saw deer on the opposite bank. Mist lay on the river.

Andrew got out of the carriage, stretched his arms and went for a quick stroll, to exercise his muscles. Throughout the short drive, he had talked only of the future.

BLOODLINES 101

Dickerson was already there, with his second, Dr. Catlett. They tossed for position and Dickerson won, but the sun was hardly up, so it made little difference.

James held the box containing the two pistols, and the duelists took their pick.

Andrew and Dickerson paced to position, and Overton gave the order to fire.

James thought that nature must have arrested time. Everything seemed to happen so slowly.

He saw Dickerson raise his gun, slowly, and point it at Andrew, slowly.

James was sweating. Dickerson was known to be a crack shot. Would the man never fire?

Alfred, standing near James, stared at the scene impassively, but was filled with emotion. There was more than one man's future at stake, if only one man's life.

Andrew stood stock-still.

Dickerson fired.

Andrew stood still.

James almost cried out in joy and relief, but only Dickerson spoke.

"My God! Have I missed him?" he cried, and stumbled away from his position.

"To your mark, sir," Overton ordered.

Slowly, so very slowly, Dickerson returned to his mark, like a condemned man approaching the gallows.

Slowly, so very slowly, Andrew raised his gun and fired.

There was a click. The gun had misfired.

Slowly, so very slowly, Andrew reset, aimed, and fired again.

Slowly, so very slowly, Dickerson swayed to the ground.

Dr. Catlett ran to attend him. He lived for the rest of that day in agony, and

died that night.

James and Alfred moved quickly to Andrew, and saw with horror that there was a hole in Andrew's jacket, just below his heart, and blood all over his boots.

"I think he pinked me," Andrew said, his face contorted in pain.

They got him to a surgeon, who took out the bullet and patched him up.

They got him home and put him to bed.

Rachel nursed him, and when she could not, Alfred was always there. He did not leave his Massa's room for a month. When Andrew recovered, he gave orders that Alfred was to be moved from the slave quarters to a bedroom next to his own in the main house.

Rachel fell to her knees and gave thanks to God for her husband's deliverance, but she prayed for the dead man's wife as well.

"God have pity on her," Rachel begged. "And on her poor child. "

Mrs. Dickerson had been six months pregnant when Andrew killed her husband.

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James attended Andrew at three other duels after that, but none had the same impact on him as the first because none of the others was fatal. It was enough to satisfy the honor of both antagonists that they had accepted the challenge and presented themselves, and they simply fired their guns in the air. On two occasions, Andrew got drunk with his opponent afterward, and they would end

the evening slapping each other on the back and laughing about their quarrel, but this never happened in the case of those who had slandered his wife.

Andrew got drunk often in the early days of his friendship with James, in the frustrating years of the embargo. Andrew could not bear inactivity or indecision. He longed for a chance to trounce the British, he longed to test his skill on a real battlefield, and the protracted negotiations among America, Britain, and France frustrated him.

"Let's hit 'em, and hit 'em hard," he cried, but James was never quite sure whom he wanted to hit, for Jefferson was included in his excoriation. James began to think there might be truth to the stories that Andrew had helped Aaron Burr in his wild plans to form a breakaway country centered in the

west, if only to provoke a war. For Andrew longed for war.

Sometimes he would arrive at James's house or, if it was early enough in the day, at the store, his speech slurred, and swaying on his feet. James would put him to bed to sleep it off, or send Ephraim with a message to the Hermitage. Then Alfred would come, hoist his inert Massa over his shoulders, as gently as a mother with a babe, and take him home in the gig.

Andrew was only a little drunk on the day he introduced James to his friends the Polks. They were at the racetrack, and Andrew's mare, Virginia, had won a splendid race and earned a handsome purse. Andrew was in an expansive mood, and kept introducing everybody to everyone, as though they had never met.

James already knew the Polks, who were a well-established family in the district, and did business with him at his store. He did not know the young woman who accompanied them that day, and who wore the black of mourning.

Sarah McCullough, bom Sarah Moore, was from one of the country's oldest families. Her grandfather had founded the vast Moorfields estate, and her

families. Her grandfather had founded the vast Moorfields estate, and her ancestry included Sir John Moore, who had been the Royal Governor of South Carolina in the early days of the colony. The family was of hardy, Scottish stock, and Sarah, born to wealth, was raised to be self-reliant and self-sufficient.

"Never ask anyone to do for you what you cannot do yourself," her father told her.

She could cook and clean and tend the vegetable garden. She was expert with horses, and a fair shot with a gun. She could plan elaborate menus with economy, and was a gracious hostess. She spoke French fluently, and her education had included the classics. She was a caring nurse, and on more than one occasion helped the slave women through difficult births.

She was also beautiful. An awkward gangly girl, and a considerable tomboy able to hold her own against her cheerful, pugnacious brothers, she lost her teenage angularity, and blossomed into one of the most attractive women in the county, with silky, chestnut hair, and limpid, amber eyes.

By the time she was seventeen, she had her choice of many

suitors, and settled for a handsome, adventurous young man, Samuel McCullough, who came from good family and shared Sarah's appetite for adventure. His parents gave them a pretty house on good land, and several slaves, and Sarah's doting father provided her with a bountiful dowry. It was a good and happy marriage, and Sarah settled contentedly to her new life, though she and Samuel talked frequently of moving west, to the new territories, to lead the simple, rustic life of pioneers. When Sarah became pregnant, Samuel attended her with affection, and fussed over her, and bought her pretty gifts.

But a young slave girl on the property, Angel, who some said had the gift of second sight, told Sarah the news almost before she knew it herself.

"You's gwine have a baby, Missy," Angel said, and Sarah was astonished that Angel was right, and took it to be a good omen.

She became ill during her pregnancy, and the distraught Samuel rode to town,

to find a physician. There had been heavy rain, and the rivers were swollen. Samuel urged his horse across a fast-flowing creek, but the animal lost its footing and master and horse were swept away.

Sarah's grief was profound, and for weeks she blamed herself for her husband's death. She took to her room and her Bible, and family friends worried for her mental state. Her father spoke to her, sharply but kindly.

"It is a tragedy," he said, "but it is not the end of the world. You must think of your own future, and the child."

Sarah, raised to an understanding that death is a fact of life, took her father's words to heart. To waste her life grieving for Samuel was an insult to his memory and could prove to be a tragic misfortune for his baby, who would need a father. Her unborn child became her reason for living, proof of her husband's love and immortality. Through the child, Samuel would live forever. She delivered a healthy baby girl, and named her Elizabeth, after the mother of John the Baptist, who had been visited by angels, and who was friend to the mother of Jesus. Faced with the glory of procreation, Sarah's soul, like Elizabeth's and Mary's before her, magnified the Lord.

But she could not live where she was, for the house and everything about her was haunted by the ghost of Samuel. She

moved in with her family, but was not happy. She began to think that she needed to move away from everything she had known, to cut all the links with Samuel and the past, and create a new life, for herself and for Elizabeth. Her father's good friend Thomas Polk offered Sarah and her child the hospitality of his home in Nashville. Sarah's father was against the idea, for he thought that Tennessee was still the wild and dangerous frontier, but Sarah was intrigued by the challenge. She spoke to the prescient Angel.

"Happen you gwine meet a new man dere, Missy," Angel said.

Sarah persuaded herself that Angel was right. The men of the settled states bored herthey were too conscious of her money and her position, and their own

ambition-and, still young, she yearned for some of the adventures she and Samuel had planned.

She was nineteen when she accepted the Polks' kind offer, and taking only Angel with her as a friend and a mammy for Elizabeth, she set off for the frontier.

She settled to the life as if she had been born to it. She loved living so close to the edge of civilization, and endured its privations with grace and a sense of humor. She stayed in mourning for Samuel for the requisite twelve months, but toward the end of that year, she began to venture out into society, anxious to enjoy herself to the full. Her first outing was on a Saturday. She went with the Polks to the Cloverbottom Race Track, enjoyed the fun of the meet, was amused by the slightly drunken owner of the horse that had won the biggest purse, and was introduced to a handsome and successful Irishman, who was some ten years older than herself.

James, conscious of her widow's weeds, tipped his hat to the lovely young woman and welcomed her to Nashville. He could hardly take his eyes off her. Her grace and composure reminded him of Rachel, and the twinkle in her eyes suggested, as with Rachel, that there was more, something wild and capricious, beneath her calm exterior.

He talked of her all the way home, to Cap'n Jack, and when he got home he talked of her to Eleanor and to Sara, and to anyone else who would listen. She was just like Rachel, he

told them. His family breathed a collective sigh of relief. At last, they thought, Jamie had met his bride.

But James, conscious of her mourning period, did not press his interest.

It made Eleanor cross

It made Eleanor cross.

“For heaven’s sake, Jamie,” she snapped, “she is almost out of the mourning. And anyway, these things mean nothing here. “

“It is not polite to ‘call on her,” James said, dreaming of Sarah.

“Well, if you don’t, someone else will,” Eleanor said. “Or do you need lessons in the etiquette of the heart?”

Eleanor’s barb had struck a bull’s-eye. James, who could be the most dazzling and charming seducer of women with whom he did not envisage any long-standing relationship, was naive in the face of love. He dreamed of Sarah by night, and mooned about her by day, but he had no idea how to tell her of his feelings, and was nervous in case she might reject him.

Sarah was not nearly so coy. She made inquiries about James, and learned of his excellent character and obvious eligibility. She called at the store on small errands, and it amused her that he, although unfailingly charming to her, was always a little tongue-tied in her presence. She made it her business to befriend his sisters Eleanor and Sara, who thought her splendid. They invited her to a quilting party, and as they sat around the frame creating the colorful comforter, they told her of James’s interest, and laughed at his shy reserve.

Sarah took matters into her own hands. If he would not come to her, she would go to him.

She talked to Cap’n Jack.

Cap’n Jack was eager to see his Massa married and with a family. The sooner James was settled, the sooner he might decide to fulfill his promise, and free his slave. He was completely sympathetic to Sarah’s cause, because she was a sympathetic woman. Of the many that his Massa might choose, Cap’n Jack hoped it would be this one, for Sarah made him feel like an equal, despite the vast gulf between them, and he could not imagine her lying to him, or treating him, or any of the slaves, badly.

Angel, Sarah’s maid, agreed with this view of her Missy.

“If’n I’s gotta be a wit’ someone,” she said, “druther be wit’ her. “

It was James’s habit and pleasure to ride on Sunday mornings, after church, to inspect his property. Away from the cotton fields, it was lovely land, with several brooks and many shady trees. It pleased James’s soul to fide through what was his, to breathe the softly scented air, and delight in nature.

“You will never amount to anything.”

He had amounted to something, and would amount to much more yet. He had proved his father wrong, and if it was not yet enough, already it was considerable.

It was a warrn and sunny day. Whippoorwills sang in the trees. Squirrels darted across the branches. Possums washed themselves at a spring, and flocks of tiny quail chased through the grass.

He saw the horse first, tethered to a sapling. Nearby there was a gig, and a picnic basket on the seat. He heard a small cry of alarm, and a tiny black woman ran to her mistress and snatched a baby from her breast.

He saw Sarah, who looked at him and stood, as if surprised. But she ignored, for a moment, Angel’s pleas to make herself decent.

Without any sense of urgency, Sarah adjusted her bodice and blouse to cover her breast, but not before she was sure James had seen her fullness, the rounded, alabaster flesh and the rosy nipple. James, who prided himself on being a gentleman, hesitated quite a long time before politely averting his eyes.

He did not see Cap’n Jack crouched in a nearby bush, grinning happily at the success of his plot with Sarah. Nor did Cap’n Jack feel the need to look away from the seminakedness of the woman he hardly knew.

I ‘Why, sir, you startled me,” Sally said, a provocative smile dancing at the comers of her lips.

“My most humble apologies,” James responded, as politely. “I shall withdraw.”

“There is no need,” Sarah said, determined to detain him. “I think I have nothing to fear from you.”

“Nothing at all,” James agreed, not intending to go.

“It’s such a pretty spot, and such a pretty day, we came for a picnic,”

Sarah said. “Should you care to join me?”

James nodded that he would, and as he dismounted, he thought he saw Cap’n Jack in the distance, walking toward him. A tiny trace of suspicion tickled at his sense of humor.

“How did you know about this place?” He came to Sarah and made himself comfortable on the grass beside her. “It is private land.”

Sarah’s eyes were sparkling, teasing him.

“Should I leave?” she wondered.

“Oh, no,” James said. “We have my permission to be here. It is my land.”

Cap’n Jack came down the path and went to the gig. He organized lunch from the picnic hamper and set it before them. No one made any reference to his being there, or expressed any surprise at his presence. James leaned back against the tree, at peace with the world. He knew he had been most exquisitely conned, and didn’t mind at all.

They passed a pleasant lunch, and found conversation easy between them.

Cap’n Jack chatted with Angel, a small distance away, and Sarah nursed Elizabeth. James could not help but think of his afternoons with Rachel, and the better he got to know Sarah, the more she reminded him of Rachel.

The time came when Sarah needed to go into the bushes, and Angel was dozing, so James took Elizabeth, and held the child while her mother was absent. Elizabeth gurgled and chuckled and reached up to grab James’s whiskers, and was perfectly happy in his arms. Later, when Sarah changed Elizabeth’s linen, James watched the simple domesticity, and yearned for it in his life.

Toward sunset, when the mosquitoes came out, they realized they had talked too long, and made a hasty departure. It was five miles to the Polk residence, and Sarah should be home before dark. Cap’n Jack went back to the house, and James drove the gig, his horse hitched to it, pointing out the parameters of his land to Sarah, as if assuring her of his financial eligibility. They arranged to attend church together the following Sunday, and to picnic again, at the same spot.

They saw each other every Sunday of the summer after that, and when her period of mourning was over, James began call-

ing on her at her home. His suit received the full approval of the Polks, who wrote to Sarah’s father, informing him of their hopes for a union between his daughter and this splendid bachelor.

Mr. Moore came to visit his daughter, and his heart was touched by what he found. The dull grief that had enshrouded Sarah was cast aside with the black dress and veil. Now his daughter was herself again, as she had been in the happier days of her life. She still thought fondly of her late husband, but looked forward eagerly to her next.

All of James’s many friends indicated their approval of the union, and voiced

their confidence in James. Mr. Moore questioned James most carefully, and if he found a certain lack of flamboyance in his prospective son-in-law, that only added luster to him, for Mr. Moore was concerned that Sarah should make a solid and reliable marriage rather than a spectacular one. There was enough flamboyance, enough cavalier behavior, in the other men of the frontier, with Andrew Jackson as the most grandiose of all, and while Mr. Moore was delighted by Andrew's company, he was pleased that Sarah had chosen a quieter man.

Before Mr. Moore left Nashville, he had given his blessing to James, who then formally proposed to Sarah, and she, as gravely, accepted. They had a party at the new Nashville Inn, and danced until dawn, and were happy.

Perhaps because Samuel had been the first love of Sarah's life, she had spent her youthful romance in that love, and what she felt for James was deeper, more secure, and less intense. Sarah was the first true reciprocated love of James's life, but he found her when he was older, and had lost the foolishness of youth. They approached each other and their marriage as adults, delighting in each other, but with a deep concern to lay the foundations for a lifelong partnership. Their great gift was laughter. James's Irish sense of humor touched some Celtic chord in Sarah, and others regarded them enviously, for their heads were always together, and their eyes were always smiling. They didn't seem to need anybody but each other, although they never excluded anyone else from their company.

Because of the confusion between Sarah, his fianc6e, and Sara, his sister, the family began calling their new relation

Sally, and it pleased her, because it made her feel young.

Sally, who had been Sarah, returned to South Carolina to visit her many relations, to put her affairs in order, and to show Elizabeth to her aunts and uncles and grandparents. She went to Baltimore and Philadelphia to buy her trousseau, and she met James's relatives there, who welcomed her into the family. She returned to Nashville the following spring, and in October, James Jackson married Sally Moore McCullough in a simple ceremony attended by two hundred friends and relations.

Andrew Jackson was James’s best man.

Friends loaned them a small house not far from town so that they might be alone, apart from several slaves, for the first few days of their marriage. They drove there late on their wedding night, Cap’n Jack and other slaves riding beside them with lanterns. At the house, Angel had made ready for her Missy and new Massa. A supper was laid on the table, and candles lighted the scene. James carried Sally over the threshold, and once the couple were comfortable the slaves drifted away to the kitchen, and made their own party.

Sally went to the bedroom first, and made herself ready. James undressed in another room, and came to her after a decent interval. He was oddly nervous. He had no doubt of his ability in the marriage bed, but he did not want to disappoint his bride, who had been married before. She had talked to him of Samuel, and he understood her passion for him, but he was anxious to prove himself the better man.

Sally was standing by the window staring out at the room. She looked ravishing in oyster silk, with her hair loose. James came to her, put his hands gently on her shoulders, kissed her elegant neck, and swore that he would do everything in his power to make her happy. She turned and her eyes told him that she believed him, and she swore a similar vow.

He bent to her and they kissed, and her mouth seemed to melt around his tongue. He picked her up and carried her to the bed, laid her down and lay beside her, stroking her, running his hands through her hair, and did not want his mouth ever to be separated from hers. He freed her breasts, and could not resist a whispered joke, that these were the reason that he had fallen in love with her. To his relief, Sally laughed, and

told him that was why she had shown herself so boldly. The laughter was the key that unlocked James’s passion. He buried his face in her breasts and explored her body with his hands and his tongue. With gentle hints and subtle persuasion, all modified by smiles and giggles, Sally guided him to those places that pleased

her, and was expert enough in the ways of men to know what he needed.

When James entered her, she locked him to her as if she would never let him go, and called out his power and her surrender. James was filled with a sense of his own masculinity, and her soft and yielding capitulation to him made him feel, at his climax, the most sublime pleasure of his life.

They slept very little that night, because he could not get his fill of her. He no longer cared if he was a better lover than Samuel; he felt no sense of competition with the dead, because he, James, was living, and her master, and she had no alternative but him, now. When she whispered her need for his baby, he shared the longing, and told her that the seed he gave her was the seed of life.

The fact that he did not have to compete with anyone, anymore, for anything, freed him from restraint, freed him from inhibition, and while his conscious mind believed that she was giving herself, his soul knew better. He was engulfed by her.

They spent their honeymoon in idyllic circumstances. The house was a charming, well-appointed log cabin, set among tall trees. The crisp, chill weather and the riotous colors of autumn filled their senses in the day, and the warmth and companionship of the marriage bed, and their lack of coy reserve, made the nights endlessly delightful. There were very few problems between them, and any that arose were solved with laughter, which remained the constant fixture of their marriage. Still they each kept a part of themselves closed from the other, believing that they had a lifetime to discover those things, and did not want to become overly familiar too soon.

After two weeks they returned to Nashville, and began the business of building their family.

A year later, Sally gave birth to a daughter, who was named Mary, as the biblical Mary had been the ftiend of Elizabeth. James was cock-a-hoop on the day Mary came into the world, and bought endless rounds of drinks for his friends at the inn,

who ribbed him gently. Making a baby wasn't so difficult, they told him.

Most men could do it. Even niggers could do that.

When he came in to see Mary for the first time, his heart filled with love for her. He could not believe that he had made this tiny, perfect thing. He held her in his arms, and sat in a chair by the window, and told her stories of how she was blessed by the fairies and leprechauns.

Mary seemed to believe him, and snuggled contentedly into her father's arms.

James looked at Sally, and smiled, and thanked her.

"Are you disappointed she isn't a boy?" Sally asked him, for she had been worried. Like all the women of the frontier, she knew sons were critical to the family's survival, and James was obsessed by family.

James laughed and said no, but examined his conscience. In truth, he had felt a mild twinge of disappointment, but had shrugged it aside. When he held Mary in his arms, not even the memory of that disappointment remained, but Sally's question had revived it.

"No," he said again, wanting to convince her that he wasn't lying. "She is beautiful."

Then he gave Sally his most impish smile.

"And anyway, she's just the first," he grinned. "We can always keep trying."

They tried very hard, but were not successful in their efforts at first.

Martha was born the following year, and Mary Ellen two years after that.

Everyone was kind, friends and relations, but they all longed for a boy, and James began to understand Andrew's obsessive need for sons. He consoled himself with the thought that at least he and Sally could produce children, while Andrew and Rachel could not.

This time James's prayers were answered. Sally delivered a son, a strapping, chubby boy, who was as healthy as anyone could wish.

The arrival of his son had an extraordinary effect on James. He held the boy, and stared at him, and, against the strong advice of Eleanor and Sara, took him outside into the warm night. He sat with his son for an hour and dreamed of the future.

He had ensured the succession of his family. His son would have everything that he did not. He would grow up surrounded by love, as James had not, and flourish and be a fine man, and inherit his father's estate, as James had not.

They would be friends, James swore to it, and while he would give his son the discipline a man needed to survive in the world, and to prosper, he would always know that he occupied first place in his father's heart. He would be honest and reliable and adventurous. He would be well provided for, he would want for nothing, but he would be given an appreciation of the value of money and the glory of labor. He would own slaves, but would be taught respect for the dignity of man. He would be given a sense of independence, and the will to expand and develop what James had created.

He could be anything he wanted to be, a farmer or a general, or both, like Andrew, but he would be a son any man could be proud of, and always, he would be loved.

James felt the salt sting of tears in his eyes. He returned his son to his women, and went and got drunk with his friends at the inn.

The son came to be known as A.J., to avoid confusion with his illustrious godfather, but that was not his name. As if to give him a sense of the majesty of which he was capable, of the heroism that was his patrimony, through his father's dearest friend, as if to remind the boy always of the man James wanted

him to emulate, he was christened Andrew Jackson Jackson.

Because always, there was Andrew.

14

Amdrew Jackson, orphaned himself as a youth, gathered young men unto him, just as he gathered sons who were not his own. He awoke the limitless horizons of the boy in all of them. He put his great, embracing arms around them and swept them off to realms of extraordinary adventure.

An extravagant Pied Piper, his embrace was extensive and undiscriminating.

Those who were prepared to follow his path were given spectacular rewards of excitement; the others simply fell by the wayside, unmourned and unnoticed by Andrew. Those who were in his way, he tried to eliminate, honorably, through duel or the courts, or by the stinging whiplash of his eloquent invective. He demanded discipline, obedience, and loyalty from his apostles, but encouraged them to explore the outer limits of their own individuality.

"He rides a streak of lightning."

James could never remember which of Andrew's entourage said that, but, oh, it was true.

So Andrew Jackson, the restless, roving visionary, had gathered James the merchant to him, and had shown him the places of legends, of chivalry and honor and breathless daring. To the misty shores of Avalon, where dedicated knights created the noble vision of Camelot, and quested the Holy Grail, and to the plains of Olympus, where fearless warriors challenged the gods.

And standing in unquestioning support of the man who would be king was the flawless Rachel, the loving woman and wife, who represented all that was good on earth.

What James could not know was that he did not stand as high in his mentor's firmament as Andrew did in his.

When John Coffee and Andrew purchased the prizewinning horse Pacolet, they decided to offer shares in the animal to their loyal friends, those who could afford it, as tokens of their esteem. The first five shares were easily allotted, but they debated the sixth.

:'Why not James?" John Coffee said. "He can afford it."

'Which James?" Andrew asked. His mind was elsewhere, and he knew several men called James.

:'James Jackson," John Coffee laughed. "The merchant."

'Oh, yes," Andrew agreed. "Let's give the bookkeeper a share. "

Andrew's parents had migrated from Ireland, and made an arduous trek from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. They settled on an adequate piece of land, and began clearing their property. It was a hard life, and Andrew's father strained him-

self grubbing tree stumps, and died in agony. A few days later, his mother gave birth to her third son, and he was called Andrew in memory of his dead father.

The widowed mother raised her son according to the creed of Sparta.

"My door is always open to brave men, and perpetually closed to cowards."

Young Andrew adored his mother and took her lessons to heart. Gifted with a fearless bravery, a passion for the use of language, and a reckless disregard for his own physical wellbeing, he had a hot temper and an unshakable conviction of his own destiny. He was bom to be a leader of men.

His Irish blood gave him a hatred of the British, and at the onset of the American Revolution he offered his services to his uncle, who had formed a small band of militia. At the age of thirteen, he was made a messenger, given a horse and a pistol, and conducted himself with complete disregard for his own safety. After an unsuccessful foray against British dragoons, Andrew and some others took refuge in a house, but were found by the enemy. Andrew resisted his arrest and received a blow to his head from an officer's sword, a bloody gash that cut to the bone, and he carried the scar of it for the rest of his days.

The death of his mother when he was fifteen devastated Andrew, but impelled him to live up to the remarkable standards of masculine behavior that she had set. At the end of the war he received a small inheritance from an uncle in Ireland, and he promptly squandered the money in a year of high living in Charleston, gambling, wenching, and cockfighting. He was broke and alone in the world, his only talents his quick mind, his gift of oratory, and an expert knowledge of horses. Relatives took him in and sent him to school, where he studied law. At the age of twenty he was made an attorney, attached to a traveling court. He found his way to Tennessee, and the reckless frontier living suited his temperament exactly. He settled in Nashville, practiced law, involved himself in politics, fought Indian marauders, and fell in love with Rachel Robards.

He also made the first of several fortunes. He accepted land, valued at ten cents an acre, in payment of fees, and with the

rush of settlers to the district, within three years the price of that same land had risen to five dollars an acre.

The frontier adored him, a rollicking, roistering, gambling, dueling, mischievous fellow, who argued successfully for Tennessee's admission to the Union, and became, by popular vote, the state's first member of the House of

Representatives. In Philadelphia, which was then the capital, he criticized George Washington, was the bane of the financial committees, and became fast friends with Aaron Burr. At the end of his term he was elected to the Senate, but he was a man of action, not negotiation, and he quit the upper house to return to Nashville and his beloved Rachel. His grateful state appointed him to the Superior Court.

He was a tough and respected judge, dedicated to rights of the individual against the state. He despised bureaucracy, he despised the banks who could hold an honest man in bondage, and he believed implicitly in the manifest destiny of the white man to inherit the land of America, for it was divinely ordained. His attitude toward the original inhabitants of the country was disparaging.

“They are fickle, and will claim any and everything,” he told James. “The treachery in their character justifies our never having faith in them.

A few gifts, a few bribes, to the chiefs and to the interpreters, will gain anything that should be ours. “

Yet he was ambivalent about them. He saw them as the sons of Cain, who had forfeited their right to God’s grace, but he admired them as mighty warriors, worthy foes to his superior skill.

There was another contradiction that puzzled James. For all Andrew’s disregard for the rights of the Indians to their land, he was kind and generous to individuals.

“They are children,” he said. “ney need the strong, guiding hand of a father who knows what is best for them.”

Later, when the war that Andrew longed for came, when John Coffee’s men had destroyed the village of Talluhatchee and killed two hundred braves, they brought Andrew a little Creek boy, whose parents were dead. The women would not look after him. Andrew took the boy to his heart, called him

Lincoyen, sent him to Rachel, his new mother, and made him part of the family. He had found another son.

Andrew's real wrath was directed toward weak white men, especially those who tried to achieve by politics what they were afraid to achieve in honest battle. Most of all, he despised the increasing encroachment of government into the lives of the pioneers, the true sons of the soil.

He loved Nashville and was bored by it. He found quarrels where he could, and defended his, and his wife's, honor against the merest slight. He ignored weak men, and challenged those strong men who were at variance with him.

He longed to prove himself in war, and despised the tyranny of peace. His dearest ambition was to avenge his mother's death. Elizabeth Jackson had died of the plague, but Andrew blamed the British, and the intolerable circumstances brought about by the Revolutionary War.

When his old friend Aaron Burr proposed a wild scheme to persuade the British to aid him in a rebellion that would free the Mississippi Valley, or Florida, or anywhere, from the govemance of, or alliance with, the United States, and to make himself ruler of that new country, Andrew was ready to listen.

But he gave a cautious response. He encouraged Burr, but kept his options open. Perhaps he believed that if Burr succeeded, there would be war, and he would fight valiantly for his country against his old friend. Perhaps he believed in Burr's vision, but detested Burr's readiness to parlay with Britain. Perhaps he was simply humoring his old friend to explore the limits of himself.

Burr failed. He was tried for treason and eventually acquitted, against the strong influence of Thomas Jefferson, but was forced into exile.

Although Andrew was never directly implicated in Burr's plot, the taint of it stayed with him for some years, and turned many in Washington against him.

Andrew languished in Nashville, gathered about him likeminded fellows, befriended James Jackson, and waited impatiently for his day, which he believed must come, for it was his destiny.

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‘There is to be war,” James told Sally,

Sally nodded.

“I suppose it was inevitable,” she said. “And will you fight?”

James shook his head.

“Andrew has other plans for me.”

Sally closed her eyes, and said a silent prayer of thanks. She had lost one husband already, and did not want to lose another. For the first time since she had known him, she blessed Andrew Jackson.

Jefferson was gone. Madison, the last of the Founding Fathers, was president. The economies of the northern and eastern states were in tatters.

As predicted by Andrew, Jefferson’s foreign policies toward the British and the French had brought the country to its knees. The protracted negotiations with the British had produced nothing. Still the country expanded. The Spanish, and several Spanish colonies, had revolted against Napoleon, and Florida had declared itself independent. Madison, unsure and uncertain of himself in other matters, annexed the territory as part of the District of New Orleans, and admitted Louisiana to the Union. The New England states, already staring at bankruptcy, threatened to rebel. More slave states would reduce their influence, and would dilute the original Union and its constitution. At loggerheads with Madison, they wanted peace with Britain and the chance to restore their trade. Foolishly advised as to Britain’s position, encouraged by the Spanish revolt against the French, and to placate New England, Madison lifted the embargo on trade with France.

The British blockaded the American ports, an American naval vessel opened fire on a British ship, and the southern war 118

on a British ship, and the southern war 116

hawks in the government, led by Henry Clay and William Crawford, and many throughout the land, pressed Madison to declare war on Britain. The immediate and long-desired prize was the British territory of Canada, the other America, which many, like Andrew, believed was part of the God-given whole.

Andrew was in a quandary. He despised Madison as a weak man, but approved of the war. Immediately, he volunteered himself and a militia division of two thousand five hundred men, vowing to take Quebec. His offer was noted and ignored.

“it is because of my friendship with Aaron Burr,” he told James bitterly.

“They will make me pay for it.”

Andrew had other reasons for despising Madison. The president had recently rechartered the national bank of the United States, and Andrew was livid with rage. The bank was a monster, the tool of government, whose octopus tentacles spread throughout the land, discouraging competition and issuing the false god of paper.

“Specie, cash money, is the one true cuffency,” he roared. “All else is fraudulent paper.”

He had reasons for his bitterness. He had frequently been the victim of promissory notes whose issuers failed to deliver what the paper promised, and he had lost more than one fortune because of it. Moreover, he was a resolute champion of the sovereignty of the individual states and believed that a central bank, the lapdog of the federal government, would eventually destroy their financial independence, and make the states entirely reliant on Washington.

Now, with the country at war, Andrew, like a champion stallion ready for the race, chafed at the bit. The Hermitage became his war room, and he called in all

race, chafed at the bit. The Hermitage became his war room, and he called in all the young men he had trained and encouraged to be ready for this moment: Davy Crockett, the frontiersman, John Coffee, the loyal and fearless lieutenant, and young Sam Houston, an odd and eccentric youth who had abandoned his white family and lived tribally, with the Creek. Sam could speak three Indian languages fluently, knew all the ways and customs, was a frequent drunk, and was a daring, unconventional warrior.

Andrew adored him.

James was there too. They sat around the table for hours on

end, debating the news, railing against the disastrous conduct of the war, drowning in liquor their fury at the loss of Detroit without a single shot, and venting in impotent anger their frustration that they were not part of it.

Unknown to any of them, they had an unlikely ally to their cause, the Shawnee chief Tecumseh, which meant Crouching Panther.

The American expeditions into Canada were abject failures. The New Englanders, who had never wanted war, were ready to sue for peace. The tiny American army and smaller navy were overextended, facing three battlefronts-the north, the south in Florida, and the Gulf Coast, centered on New Orleans, which was vulnerable to attack from the British possessions in the Caribbean.

In the West, the charismatic Tecumseh was able to do what few other Indians had done, and gathered the tribes into a common cause against the white man. He had a vision of a great confederation of the Indian people which would extend from the northern lakes to the southern gulf, and would annihilate the whites. Encouraged by British agents to believe they would side with him against the Americans, Tecumseh and his devoted followers waged a war of attrition on the settlements of Ohio and the Mississippi.

Faced with disaster on all sides, the War Office finally accepted Andrew's offer, if he, in turn, would accept a subordinate command under General Wilkinson, in New Orleans. Andrew ranted and raved, but any action was better

than no action, so he agreed. Perhaps as a sop, he was given the rank of major general.

Jubilation swept the Hermitage war room. Within two days they had raised the full complement of twenty-five hundred men, and made preparations to leave for New Orleans.

“But what can I do?” James said, rather plaintively, because he was feeling left out. He had thought of offering to enlist, but considered it better he stay with Sally, who was pregnant.

Andrew looked at him as if he had forgotten who he was, and then assumed his most benign and confidential manner.

“You have a marvelously important job to do here,” he told James. “You must look after Rachel, who will be bathed in tears at my departure.”

It was a job that suited James exactly, but Andrew had something else for him. Generous to a fault, he was perpetually short of money. He asked for a loan from James, to equip and uniform his men, and feed them, until funds arrived from Washington.

He needed five thousand dollars. James was only too happy to agree, thinking that he was making a magnificent contribution to the war effort, if only by proxy.

Besides, all Andrew had to do was ask. All he ever had to do was ask, and James would have given him the moon.

Andrew’s division set off for New Orleans in the middle of the worst winter anyone could remember.

General Wilkinson wanted Andrew's men, but not Andrew. He ordered them to make camp at Natchez, to await developments. This made sense to Andrew for it would position his unit to respond to any British invasion along the coast, not just at New Orleans. Then an order arrived from the War Office ordering Andrew to disband his men and return to Nashville.

Andrew understood the ploy immediately. Without funds to feed his men, they would be easy recruits for Wilkinson. He wrote accepting the dismissal of his services, but insisted that he would return his men to their homes at his own expense.

The bad weather got worse, but Andrew triumphed. He led his men on an impossible journey through the snow and bitter cold, cajoling, urging, encouraging, careless of his own comfort, and he became the stuff of legend. His soldiers revered him for it, called him tougher than hickory, and because he was their father, he became known to them, and to the country, as Old Hickory.

On their return to Nashville, tattered and torn, cold and weary, reduced to eating horseflesh, never having fired a shot in anger, they were feted as heroes and showered with honors.

James glowed with pride and patriotism. Under the circumstances he could not possibly ask for the return of his loan, for it was his money that had sustained the gallant soldiers through their arduous trek.

Nor could he refuse Andrew another loan, for another expedition, this time against the Creek, in Alabama.

Tecumseh-Crouching Panther-had inspired many of the younger braves throughout the country, and if many rejected his calls for violence, several listened. A half-breed, William Weatherford, whose father laid claim to being the principal Creek chief, organized a war party, and attacked and destroyed the settlement at Fort Mims in southern Alabama.

Encouraged by this success, other Creek had joined him, and now much of

Encouraged by this success, other Creek had joined him, and now much of Alabama was under threat.

The news came to Andrew on his sickbed. He had been wounded by Thomas Benton and his brother Jesse, after a silly misunderstanding that had led to a duel between Jesse and Billy Carroll, Andrew's brigade inspector.

Andrew had no part in it, and, wanting to keep his nose clean with Washington, had discouraged the antagonists, but to no avail. The duel was fought with Jesse winning the toss. He fired first but missed, and panicked, and turned his back on Billy Carroll, who promptly shot him in the rump.

Tennessee thought Jesse's discomfort was a grand joke, but Tom Benton, who had been a favorite of Andrew's, took his brother's side. He accused Andrew of inciting the duel, and Andrew had threatened to horsewhip him.

It all came to a head at the Nashville Inn when Thomas and Jesse, with some others, attacked Andrew. John Coffee, guns blazing, put them to flight, but Andrew was severely wounded, shot twice in the arm, and the doctors recommended amputation.

"I will keep my arm," Andrew said.

Rachel and Alfred nursed him, but none of their ministrations succeeded as well as the news that two hundred and fifty whites had been massacred at Fort Mims, and Weatherford was marching north, to other white settlements.

"By the eternal, these people must be saved," he announced, and Tennessee agreed.

Andrew got up from his bed and made ready for war. The governor of Tennessee commissioned a punitive expedition, and John Coffee formed the cavalry.

The day had come. This was Andrew's time.

He borrowed more money from James, against the promise of repayment as soon as he had Treasury funds, and again, James gave it willingly.

All Andrew had to do was ask.

James didn't tell anyone but Sally about the loan, because when he told her, she was angry. Andrew had often borrowed small sums from James and never repaid them. He still owed five thousand from the Natchez adventure. Now there was more.

It was the first sustained argument of their marriage, for James could not make her see his position, nor could he tell her with any truth what his position was. The loans made him feel part of the war, part of the adventure, but obviated any risk, except the financial one which he could well afford. Until this time, he had shared all his money dealings with Sally, but now he began to close this part of his life to her, and kept his business to himself.

The Creek War, as it came to be called, was a triumph for Andrew, and all who served him loyally. Sam Houston used his formidable knowledge of the Creek and their customs to send spies to the Indians, and encouraged those who had not fought to join with Old Hickory, who was undefeatable. Cherokee and Chickasaw, Choctaw and some Creek joined with Andrew. The spies reported Weatherford's numbers and intentions. Davy Crockett led a small band of men in forays of lightning speed and ferocity, aided by the shock of surprise, which all reinforced the concept of Andrew's invincibility.

It was winter again, and the Creek were poorly supplied. Armed only with bows and arrows, a few muskets, and a desperate faith in their cause, they soon fell to the greater numbers and artillery of the army that they faced.

Andrew's obstacles were not all of Indian invention, but all added to his reputation. Four times, his poorly fed, poorly uniformed, and poorly supplied troops rebelled, and each time Andrew suppressed the mutiny by the sheer force of his personality and his iron determination. Still weak from loss of blood, wracked with dysentery, and living on acorns and horseflesh, he would not ask men to endure anything he would not suffer himself.

He thought of the men as his children, and called them such. In the case of Private John Woods, he sacrificed one of his children. Woods was condemned to death for refusing to obey

a disciplinary order. Andrew believed he was part of a previous mutiny, but Woods, who was seventeen, had only recently taken his brother's place in the ranks. Militiamen, irregular volunteers, were seldom put to death, no matter how grave their offense, and Andrew had the power to reduce the sentence, but, like Abraham sacrificing Isaac, he chose not to do so, and no divine power stayed his hand.

Woods was duly executed by firing squad.

There was little talk of mutiny after that, and his men came to respect Andrew as never before.

Still he stared at disaster. After Andrew had won two small victories, some Creek sued for peace, and Governor Blount of Tennessee was prepared to parlay. The increasing disaster that was the war against the British had soured him on military conquest, but Andrew would not accept his orders to abandon his base and return to Nashville. In a passionate letter to Blount he insisted that the frontier would never be peaceful until this insurrection was put down, and demanded more men. His obstinacy, and the War Office, which was desperate for any success, no matter how small, persuaded Blount, and Andrew marched on with five thousand extra troops.

After several minor battles he surrounded the Creek stronghold at Horseshoe Bend. Believing that the Great Spirit had promised them victory, the Creek fought almost to the last man, and by the end of the day the battlefield was a scene of carnage. Weatherford himself had not been at Horseshoe Bend, and Andrew went in search of him. At Fort Toulouse, which was renamed Fort Jackson, Weatherford surrendered.

The Creek war was over, and the victorious troops and their general went home.

To glory.

To a population utterly depressed by a failed war with Britain, Andrew was the hero they needed. His fame spread throughout the land, and cheering crowds lined the streets on his approach to Nashville. A state dinner was organized, and a victory parade.

All the buildings were draped in flags and bunting, and people came from all over Tennessee to see the triumph. Andrew sat on the official stand with Rachel, and because all his lieutenants and men were marching, James and Sally were invited

to sit with them. Sally had baby Mary with her, and Rachel looked after Andrew junior, while Andrew dandled Lincoyen on his knee.

Bands played, people cheered, and the soldiers were resplendent. James felt himself in the company of heroes. He never asked Andrew for the return of his money, nor was it ever offered. As the troops marched past the reviewing stand to the salutes of their general, someone called out three cheers for Old Hickory. The crowd took it up, and the air resounded with the calls of Andrew's name. James, standing beside him, was moved to tears.

But Andrew had a surprise for them all. After the soldiers came a dozen Indian braves, prisoners, whom Andrew had brought back as hostages, or as evidence of the battles he had fought.

They were the finest of the fine-on horseback, nearly naked, bedecked in war paint and feathers. The crowd hushed in awe at sight of them, for these were the warriors as they were seen only in battle, in dead of night or heat of day, when very few white men lived to describe them, and no white woman had survived the encounter.

Their squaws walked behind them, and half-breeds with drums. Priests of the Cherokee and Chickasaw chanted ancient hymns in praise of the victor.

To James, it was the most exotic and extraordinary experience of his life, and it caught at his soul.

Before him was man in his purest, simplest form. Man of the wilderness, at one with the wild, lord of a lawless world, where survival required a consummate union with the earth and the heavens. Man the hunter, living from the land, and taking from it only what could be given back.

Andrew had no need to guess what James was thinking, for he felt it, and assumed that every man would when confronted with the challenge of these splendid creatures. Yet he owed a debt to his friend, and tried to communicate to him what his money had bought.

“It is to do battle on the plains of Mount Olympus,” he said softly, so only James could hear, and perhaps Lincoyen.

“The landscape itself could be the domain of the gods, for it is the very best of America, pristine and pure. The unsullied handiwork of God.”

He didn’t speak for a moment, but stared at the Indians.

“These are not ordinary men,” he said. “These are the most noble animals, bred by Hermes and blessed by Apollo. To do battle with them is to challenge the authority of Zeus.”

Suddenly, some strange and mysterious anger exploded in him, and he turned to James in fury.

“And I choose to do it! I am not chosen by some panel or drafted by some committee! It is not my fate, for I am master of my own destiny. I choose to challenge these colossi, and I win! “

Andrew had James completely in his thrall, and turned back to look at his prisoners again.

“They are magnificent,” he said softly.

At that moment, James would have given everything he possessed, everything in the world-he would have sold his soul to the devil-to know, if only for a moment, the heroic, surpassing majesty it must be to kill an Indian.

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Andrew had other spoils of war. Sent to negotiate a peace treaty with the Creek, he gave them an ultimatum, and would not concede one single point of it.

Under threat of war and destruction, and in return for some small annuities to the chiefs, the elders of the tribes of the Creek, in council, ceded to Andrew Jackson, representative of the United States government, twenty-three million acres of land.

It was half of the ancient realm of the Creek and covered most of Alabama and part of Georgia. Tennessee was no longer the frontier.

For the restless, journeying settlers, a new paradise had been found.

But before they could take possession of it, Andrew had to win another battle.

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In order to teach the Americans a lesson, a small British expeditionary force had attacked the capital, Washington, and had set fire to the president’s home. They withdrew and attacked Baltimore, but were repelled by gunfire. It didn’t matter. The point had been made.

Tired of the war, the British amassed an army of ten thousand veterans, who had served under Wellington against Napoleon, and prepared an invasion of

America on two fronts. One army, under Sir Alexander Cochrane, took Maine and declared it part of New Brunswick. He seized Nantucket and made a foray into Long Island Sound. New England demanded Washington make peace and threatened secession from the Union.

Another British army, with Jamaica as its base, was to attack New Orleans.

Andrew had a spy in Florida, where some British units were inciting the Seminole to revolt, and got wind of the invasion plans. He implored the government to send him south, but Madison, perhaps because the peace negotiators in Belgium were close to an agreement, delayed his response.

So Andrew acted on his own accord, with only the blessing of Governor Blount of Tennessee. He was now the military commander for the Southwest, so he took his troops to New Orleans, declared martial law, engaged every able-bodied man he could find, and waited for the British.

He needed money for the venture, and James, once again, was only too happy to oblige. This time he would be repaid, not in cash out of Andrew's pocket or the federal treasury, but in something far more valuable than money.

Andrew had succeeded in having John Coffee appointed as a surveyor to map the new territories acquired from the Creek, and Coffee's boundaries erred on the other side of caution. Once the survey was complete and Andrew had returned from New Orleans, a company was to be formed, the Cypress Development Company, with Coffee and other friends as its principals, and James as secretary, to promote and develop vast acreages of this new land. To the surprise of everyone except James, Andrew, who was a prime mover of the enterprise, took only a few modest shares in the company. James guessed that it was because of his political ambitions.

Andrew did not want

his reputation to be sullied with the taint of speculation.

The British landed near New Orleans, but Andrew did not wait to be attacked. He sent a small army into the British lines, under cover of night, and produced chaos and confusion. When the British reorganized themselves to attack, Andrew had completed his defenses. The British forces, unused to the swampy land and unprepared for Andrew's unconventional tactics, were routed.

The battle of New Orleans was fought and won by Andrew at the beginning of January. Unknown to him, or to any of the participants, the negotiators in Ghent had signed a peace treaty between Britain and the United States the previous Christmas Eve, two weeks earlier, but the news had not yet reached America.

Nor did the Americans care. Andrew was hailed as the greatest general since Washington, the one true, unsullied victor in a useless war, even if the war was officially over when the battle was won. The country went wild for him, and he was proclaimed a hero. At a convention in Hartford, the New Englanders had agreed on an ultimatum that unless there was peace they would secede, but tore up the paper on the news of the victory and the subsequent news of the peace.

There was nothing his country would not grant him. All Andrew had to do was ask.

James, jubilant, assumed Andrew would run for president, and undoubtedly be elected. He had visions of himself as a powerful figure behind Andrew's throne, but the hero disappointed him. He was not ready for elective office yet; he enjoyed being a general far more, and there was work to be done.

Because Andrew wanted Florida.

It had been Andrew's ambition from the beginning. Florida had been held by the Spanish until Napoleon defeated them, and then the western section of it, which bordered the Gulf of Mexico, was annexed as a territory by the United States. The peninsula itself, still governed by Spain, was a wild and lawless land, peopled by pirates and hardy settlers, runaway slaves from Georgia and South Carolina, buccaneers, mercenaries, and criminals of all classes. During the war, the British had successfully incited some of the locals to revolt, and now the native Seminole Indians, together with some Creek who had

fled Alabama, took up arms. Andrew believed that the South was not safe until Florida had been brought to heel. He offered his services to the new president, James Monroe, and marched to Pensacola, leaving his affairs in the good hands of his friend James Jackson.

Who didn't know what to do with the rest of his life.

James had settled into a comfortable routine. Partly because of his financial success and his industrious relatives, and partly because of his friendship with Andrew, he was one of the most prominent citizens in Nashville. He and some others had founded the Arst Academy for Females, he was on several boards and committees, and he had political ambitions, but he was bored. His personal life was full and happy, although there was a small tragedy when Jimmy Hanna, Sara's husband, died of a fever, and Uncle Henry had passed away, but otherwise Sally and the children, Eleanor and Tom and their family, and Sara and hers flourished.

He had achieved so much, and yet none of it was original, none of it was unique to him. Even his plantation had been created by someone else; James had simply acquired it in one of his land deals.

He had outgrown Nashville, which once had seemed so perfect to him.

He wanted to do something grand and extravagant, like Andrew, but he knew he was not suited for military endeavors. At the urging of John Coffee, he went to inspect the land in northern Alabama that had been acquired in the Creek war, and fell in love with the wonderful, empty country.

A vision came to him, of a great estate that he would create, a vast cotton plantation that would be one of the finest in the country, and he would be a pioneer in this new territory, one of the first white settlers on the land so newly acquired, and one of its leading citizens.

He took Sally on a trip to inspect the new territory, and she shared his enthusiasm. She knew he was bored, knew he needed some new challenge, and the prospect of building a home to their exact requirements intrigued her. She also remembered her early dreams with her first husband, of moving to the wilderness, and creating a sylvan idyll, and there was

enough of the girl in her and enough of the pioneer to want that still.

Acquiring the land was easy. The Cypress Development Company struck a dcal with the government to exploit the area. Prior to Andrew's departure for Florida, the dining room at the Hermitage became a new boardroom, of peace not of war, and one in which James was a welcome participant. In long and cheerful sessions that went on till well past midnight, often fueled by liquor, they envisioned the development of northern Alabama.

The lots would be decided according to John Coffee's survey. County boundaries were established. A new town would be laid out. It was to be called Florence, after the city in Tuscany, and architects and town planners were to be brought from Europe. It would be the finest city in the South, a cultural center and capital of a new Eden that would be peopled by those most honest and industrious of souls, the simple farmers, backbone of America.

These were heady and exciting days for James, who, as secretary of the development company and Andrew's associate, was at the very center of the activity. He threw all his energy into the enterprise, and yet did not forget himself.

He had a surprising visit from someone he had not seen in several years.

Jimmy Doublehead, son of the chief, was living on a Chickasaw reservation to the south of Nashville, near Huntsville, and heard that James was involved in the new company. He came to see James to ask a favor. He wanted him to buy a particular piece of land.

They rode together to the place Jimmy had in mind, and when James saw it, his heart skipped a beat. A few miles south of where the new town of Florence would be, at a confluence of two rivers whose banks were lined with untidy cypresses, the land was rolling and gentle, ideal for cotton.

Some small distance from the river there was a hill, and it was this hill that

interested Jimmy.

“It is a holy place, sacred to my people,” he told James. “It is a place of the old ones.”

In the Indian mythology, the spirit of a warrior did not die with his body, but simply moved to a higher plane, and was available to the living for advice and counsel. Once a year,

old Chief Doublehead had called the other Cherokee chiefs to this place, and they had listened to the guidance of the old ones.

James was deeply moved by the land and its significance, and felt humble.

“Why have you come to me, Jimmy?” he asked the young man.

“Because you were his friend, and you were kind to our people,” Jimmy said. “You will preserve his memory.”

James spent the afternoon exploring the land, and told Jimmy he would buy it, no matter what the cost. Already he could see a mansion rising on the sacred hill, but he was determined to do as Jimmy asked, and preserve Doublehead’s memory.

“I will put a wigwam here,” he said, pointing to an open space at the edge of the little hill. “And it will be available to a family of your tribe for all time, so that they may be near the old ones.”

Jimmy said nothing, but bowed his head, in what James thought was gratitude. He could not know the despair that Jimmy, and all the Indians, were experiencing at this loss of their land. What Jimmy had done was pragmatic, but not his most desired solution.

The deal for the land was simple. The Cypress Development Company guaranteed to develop a minimum number of acres, and the government would receive two dollars an acre regardless of whether the land was sold or not. Whatever else was bid would be profit to the developers.

The auction was a circus. The first five thousand acres sold at an average of forty-five dollars an acre. The end of the war and the resolution of the old arguments with Britain, the swarming tide of immigrants from Ireland and Europe, and the availability of the new land opened the floodgates to settlements, and buyers flocked to the sales.

The past president, James Madison, came with President Monroe. A potential presidential candidate came when Andrew Jackson made a special trip from Florida to bid for a lot. Out of respect for his service to the country, no one bid against him. The only land that was sold at the government minimum was sold to Andrew.

The gentry from five states came. Farmers from major, medium, and small land holdings came. Newcomers bought their first lots. Poor whites bid for a few scrubby acres to get a start in life. River frontage and the town sites fetched the highest prices, eighty-five dollars an acre.

Church sites were purchased by Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics.

The directors of the Cypress Development Company bought land for personal use or for private resale. Apart from the site of his plantation, James bought twelve lots for himself, and another three in partnership with John Coffee.

By the end of the four-day sale, James was rich beyond his wildest imaginings.

On the afternoon of the last day, he drove Sally to the place that was to be their

On the afternoon of the last day, he drove Sally to the place that was to be their new home, and she loved it as much as he. Together they chose a name. It would be called The Forks of Cypress, for it lay where the two rivers, the Big Cypress and the Little Cypress, joined. He told her of its holy significance, and that he believed the land was blessed.

It was a magic time, a cool, crisp day, and the winter sun lay low on the horizon. Sally wandered away to inspect the property, and James was on his own for a few minutes.

He stared at the land. His land.

"You will never amount to anything."

His father's final words to him rang in his ears, and he laughed out loud, for he had proved them so wrong. He shivered at the awesome achievement, and thought it was the cold, but then he saw a small group of Indians standing on the path at the bottom of the hill, staring at him.

They did wothing and saidnothing. They simply stared at him, or at the hill that was the home of the old ones, as if they were looking at what they had lost.

James shivered again, and turned and called for Sally. She came to him, and when he looked back, the Indians had gone. He could not swear that they had been there.

"What is it, what's wrong?" Sally asked him. James laughed and threw aside his odd feeling of melancholy, or failure, or betrayal.

"Nothing," he said. "I'm a sentimental old fool, that's all."

She laughed, and took his hand. James pulled her to him and kissed her, lightly at first, but then with passion.

Sally looked at him in surprise, for his need was urgent.

“I want you,” he whispered, “Here. Now.”

He kissed her again, as violently as he had ever kissed her. He laid her on the ground, and took her there, in the open, like a peasant boy, as once, when young, he had taken a peasant girl under a hayrick in a flawless Irish summer that he had spent with Sean.

At the moment of his climax, he pulled himself from her and spilled his seed upon the ground, as if to consummate his union with the land.

The following day, both James and Sally caught chills and laughed together that it was because of their open-air frolicking in the winter weather.

Sally’s cold took a natural course and was gone in a few days, but James got steadily worse. By the time they were back in Nashville, he had congestive fever. He took to his bed, but the sickness did not diminish his passion for his new project. He engaged an architect to draw plans for a magnificent mansion, but the effort exhausted him. He fretted that he was losing time.

Sally took command. She asked their good friends John McKinley and Henry Clay, Jr., to scour the South, to locate and hire, or buy, the best available slave artisans and craftsmen, masons, carpenters, ironworkers, and plasterers to build The Forks of Cypress.

James, from his sickbed, anxious to move to his new home, gave orders that a log cabin should be built for his family at the edge of the site, and a small schoolhouse for the children.

He began disposing of his assets in Nashville. He called Washington and Thomas Kirkman to him, and offered them his interest in the store.

Washington laughed that he didn’t want it, he was well set up in New Orleans and loved the life, so the store was formally deeded to Thomas Kirkman for the sum of one dollar, in the name of Irish friendship.

Thomas was flabbergasted. Eleanor wept, and blessed her generous brother.

James did not want to move his precious blooded horses to Alabama until

proper stables and a racetrack had been built,

and so he arranged that his trainer, Colonel Elliot, should run the stables in Nashville, and be responsible for the horses. He made Elliot a partner in the enterprise.

He sold his plantation and most of his land. In the new year, he cast aside his illness as he cast aside his old life, and moved his family to the hastily constructed log cabin, to supervise the building of his mansion.

Now he had everything he had ever wanted. Now he was everything he had ever wanted to be.

In Florida, fortune briefly deserted her darling. Andrew's military victories were impressive, but the ruthlessness with which he inflicted his will on the Seminole was causing agitated controversy in Washington. When he executed two Christian missionaries, claiming they had incited the Indians to revolt, the controversy became uproar. When he invaded Pensacola for a second time and imprisoned the governor for sheltering Indians, the uproar became deafening. The loudest voices against him were William Crawford, the secretary of war, and his onetime friend Henry Clay. The House of Representatives threatened censure.

The furious Andrew traveled to Washington to defend himself, and prevailed.

All the motions against him were defeated. Because of his military success, the Spanish formally sold Florida to the United States for five million dollars.

Andrew was given a hero's welcome in New York, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, and then returned to Nashville, to the Hermitage, and to his beloved Rachel. His feathers were ruffled, but his honor was satisfied.

The following summer, Andrew was appointed governor of Florida, but he came to see James, because he had some other business to attend to first.

He admired the mansion, which was now nearing completion, a simple elegant building in the temple style, with three enormous chimneys and twenty-one white columns surrounding the veranda at even intervals. A wide entrance hall ran through the middle of the house, with a cross hall at the rear.

The kitchen and laundry were outhouses, attached to the main building by covered walkways.

Andrew helped James plant a magnolia sapling at the edge

of the hill on what would be the lawn, and played with the new baby, Sarah.

"A sassy little thing," he laughed. "But there are too many Sarahs."

So he called her Sassy, which suited her.

Andrew junior and Lincoyen were with their father and played with Al, while Cap'n Jack yarned with Alfred, and inspected the racecourse that had been laid out to one side of the drive.

"There is the matter of the Chickasaw land," Andrew said.

James waited, knowing what the outcome of the conversation would be.

But he would make Andrew ask, first.

Andrew had been commissioned by the government, with Isaac Shelby, to treat for some Chickasaw land, to the north, where Jimmy Doublehead lived.

Andrew estimated that three hundred thousand dollars would be a sufficient outlay, and the sum was approved in principle. Privately, Andrew met with a chief, George Colbert, who was known as "the soul of the Chickasaw," and laid out his policy. Colbert's cooperation could enrich him personally, but if the land was not sold to the government there would be war, and many Chickasaw would die.

George Colbert was pragmatic. He agreed to persuade his people in return for a permanent annuity for himself and his brother, Levi, of the right to reserve some good land for himself, and the purchase of a piece of land he owned for twenty thousand dollars. Andrew agreed.

A formal public council of the Chickasaw was called. Andrew made a speech that was now familiar to him. If the Chickasaw did not agree to his terms, there would be war, and he would annihilate them as he had the Creek. If they did agree, the purchase price would be paid over ten years, after which they would move to new land, given freely by the govemment, in the west, beyond the Mississippi.

He shouted an offer. “One hundred and fifty thousand.”

The Chickasaw conferred among themselves, and shouted back their collective response.

“No! 11

“Two hundred thousand,” Andrew shouted.

” No! “

Andrew offered two hundred and fifty thousand, and the response was still no.

Andrew appeared to confer with Isaac Shelby, and came back with what he said was his final offer.

“Three hundred thousand.”

Shelby called that they were not authorized to go that high, and Andrew responded that in order to be fair to the people, he would pay the difference out of his own pocket.

The Chickasaw were confused and George Colbert saw his moment. He made a speech in which he accepted Andrew's terms on his own behalf. His brother, Levi, made a speech in which he agreed to the terms, and one by one the chiefs accepted.

They demanded the first payment, and the Colberts wanted their bribes immediately. Andrew, perpetually short of ready money or reluctant to use his own, doubted that he could persuade the government to part with the cash quickly enough to satisfy the Chickasaw. He came to James.

"How much?" James wondered, after Andrew had asked him.

"Fifty thousand," Andrew said.

James stared at Andrew junior, A.J., and Lincoyen, who were playing settlers and braves on the land that would be the lawn. He could afford the money and could not deny Andrew, who had helped to make him rich. But he was planning on a political career himself, and he was concerned that some of his money would be used to pay the bribes. Still he agreed. He had never been able to deny Andrew anything.

Andrew nodded, but did not thank him. They chatted for a while about the prospect of Alabama being admitted into the Union, and Andrew urged James to stand for election to the new state's senate. Soon after, he said tender farewells to James, Sally, and the children, greeted Cap'n Jack affably, and left with his sons and Alfred.

James watched him go, and pondered what he had done. He remembered a small group of Indians, Creek probably, who had watched him on this same hill the day he bought the property, and he shivered a little, as he had shivered then.

Sally knew something was wrong, and worried that he might be ailing again.

James shook his head, and walked into the shell of the house with her. They wandered through the spaces that soon would be rooms, planning how they would furnish them. Sally did not ask him about Andrew's visit.

She guessed it was to do with money, and Andrew, but James didn't usually discuss these things with her anymore. To her surprise, this time he did.

Sally listened in silence, and realized something extraordinary. Ever since she had complained that Andrew never repaid his loans, James had closed off a part of his life, his business dealings, from her. Now she thought she understood why. James would worry away at a problem until he either found a solution or, as in this case, needed her advice. It pleased her that he asked. It healed the only rift, no matter how tiny, that had ever existed between them.

"The money is nothing," she said. "There is the matter of your good name."

James nodded, for she had come straight to the heart.

"But I can't refuse him," he said. "I owe him too much."

Sally didn't entirely agree, but kept her counsel. On the matter of his friendship with Andrew, James could be extraordinarily touchy.

"The government will not pay?" she asked, looking for a solution.

"Eventually, but not in time," James said. "It has to go through all the requisite departments."

"So the land will be lost?"

"Not forever, because Andrew will not allow it to be lost," James told her. "He will make war, and he will win."

"Andrew always wins," Sally said with a smile.

She thought for a moment.

"What if you bought the land'?"

James was astonished.

“Don’t you think we have enough?”

That was not Sally’s point. If the government were to give, through Andrew, deeds to some of the land, it would always appear that James’s money had been used for a purchase. Then, at some later date, when the funds were freed by Washington and his money repaid, James would return the title deeds.

James assimilated what she said, and then laughed out loud. It was so simple, so beautifully simple. He hugged his wife to him.

“Oh, I love you,” he said.

Getting Andrew to agree was a protracted business, conducted through correspondence. James wrote, expressing his concern at the size of the loan, and requesting some title deeds as collateral. Andrew replied, rather sharply, that he was surprised that James had reneged on his original unconditional offer of the money, and assumed that the bribes were worrying James, that the government would not reimburse them. There was no need for concern. Andrew had simply told the government that he had been forced to pay somewhat more for the land than he had expected.

Still James insisted on the collateral, and eventually Andrew gave in.

Title deeds to several lots of the Chickasaw land were made out in James’s name, and he sent Andrew the money in return. Later, when Washington had completed its paperwork, James got his money back, and returned the deeds to the government.

James felt good. He had obliged his friend, and covered his own position.

For once in his life he had outsmarted Andrew, who might be a better man on the battleground or in a duel, but in matters of business, James was the champion. He was also one of the richest and most influential men in the state.

Then came the news that his father had died, in Ireland. James was not sure what he felt, and guilty that he did not feel any special sense of loss. He thought that he should mourn his father as the man who had given him life, but that was all his father had done. How could he love a father who had disinherited him? True to his word, his father had left James nothing in his will.

Of one thing James was certain. His sons would never feel toward him the way he felt to his dead father, He called A.J. to him, and sat his son on his knee. He told him stories of Ireland, of shanachies and leprechauns and rainbows. He promised the lad that he loved him, and that he would create the finest estate in the South for A.J. to inherit.

A.J. nodded his head gravely, and thanked his father, but

then begged for more stories about leprechauns. James laughed, and remembered some.

But when A.J. had gone to bed, James had several glasses of port, and got drunk, and tried to remember a father who never told him tales of leprechauns.

“You will never amount to anything.”

“You will see, Father,” James said to his empty glass. “You will see.”

When Alabama was admitted into the Union, James allowed himself to be persuaded to stand as a state senator in the next election. He received petitioners gladly, and dispensed patronage. He was sought out by politicians from Washington and Montgomery, the new state capital, and his mansion was admired as one of the finest houses in the South. He bought racehorses for his stable, and Monkey Simon, from Nashville, as his master jockey, to train the younger men.

Determined that his staff, his slaves, would be of the first quality, he traveled with Cap'n Jack through Georgia and South Carolina, attending, for the first time in his life, slave auctions.

Cap'n Jack could hardly bear to watch as James inspected the slaves as carefully as he examined his pedigree horses, checking their bones, teeth, and physiques, and inquiring, as far as was possible, into their bloodlines. Then Cap'n Jack steeled himself. He had sworn that he would never give James cause to back out of his promise of freedom, and so, however unwillingly, he helped his Massa choose the slaves. James purchased several excellent field hands, and then found a splendid, superbly trained butler, who came with the highest credentials and who had the odd name of Parson Dick.

It was Cap'n Jack who found Annie.

When he saw the beautiful woman with skin the color of coffee, who was said to have expert talent as a weaver, James's vanity was tickled. He would acquire her and build a weaving house, and all the cloth that was needed at The Forks of Cypress, for the slaves' clothing and blankets, would be woven on his estate. Only the very rich could afford to do that.

It thus happened that he bought the woman called Annie,

whose previous Massa had sold her away because he believed she was cursed with ill fortune.

Perhaps he was fight, for Annie had bewitched Cap'n Jack already.

17

Annie was a child of rape. Her mammy never told her this, but Annie knew it was true. Every time she asked about her pappy, Mammy's eyes got angry, and she would smack her, and tell her never to ask about him again. Then her

she would smack her, and tell her never to ask about him again. Then her mammy would cry, and tell her that her pappy was a white man who didn't want anything to do with her, but Mammy would look after her always.

Annie loved her mammy. Mammy had been bom to an African mother and a Cherokee father, back in the old days when some white Massas had Indians as slaves, and not just black folk. Mammy's father could not bear his enslavement, and had simply curled up and died. Mammy's mother, from Africa, knew all sorts of things about magic, and taught them to her daughter, so Mammy knew lots of ways to heal people who were sick, to put a blessing on those who wanted a baby, or put a curse on bad people.

Mammy taught all this to Annie, and some other things as well, learned from her Cherokee father. Mystical things that were also about the spirit people, and the power that existed in simple things, the trees and the animals and the birds, and the sky, and the very land itself.

Their Massa made Mammy work very hard, and she got sick. Annie tried to cure her with charms and spells and herbs, but she was very young, and didn't have the proper power yet. Massa came to see Mammy one day, and threatened to sell her away if she didn't get better. Then he saw Annie, whom he had never really noticed before; she'd always been just one of the pickaninnies. Now she was a beautiful young girl in her

early teens, with a developing figure. The Massa told her to take off her clothes.

Mammy cried out and tried to stop him, but she was too weak. The Massa beat Annie when she didn't strip fast enough for him, and when she was naked he used his whip to prod her small breasts, and pushed it between her legs.

Annie was crying, but Massa didn't care. He told her to lie down on the floor, then he unbuckled his belt and pushed down his pants. He got on top of Annie and pushed himself inside her, suddenly, violently. Annie screamed in pain, but he wouldn't stop. He kept pumping into her, and the more she cried, the more he pushed and pumped. When he was finished, he got up and saw that there was a little blood on his thing. He laughed, and said now he was sure that Annie had

been a virgin. He hit her again, to remind her that he was the Massa, and told Mammy to fix it so she didn't have a baby.

Annie lay on the floor after he was gone, until the pain went away, and then she got up and went to Mammy, who was crying.

"Don't cry, Mammy," she said. "It don't make no never mind. "

But she was lying, and Mammy knew it.

Mammy never got better and seemed to lose the will to live. She died soon after that, and Annie cried bitterly, because now she was all alone. That night she lay in her bunk, and tried to remember all the spells that Mammy had taught her to put a curse on the Massa.

Perhaps they worked, because Massa didn't seem very interested in her after that. He came to her a few times and did what he wanted, but he said it wasn't the same because she wasn't a virgin anymore, and he hit her, because she wasn't a virgin.

A lot of very unlucky things happened to Massa, and Annie believed they were because of her curse. He broke his leg when his horse reared at a snake. His favorite hunting dog was gored by a wild pig. His best fighting cock was killed in the pit. His newborn baby died. He had two bad seasons with his cotton and had to sell some of his slaves. Annie was one of them.

She was bought by an old man who had a big building with

some looms in it, where other slave women made cloth that was sold at the market. Annie only helped them at first, but one of the women taught her the craft, and she became an excellent weaver. She liked the other women, and they were kind to her, but she was always sad, because she missed her mammy.

She'd been there about six months when her new Massa called her into his office one day. He told her to take off her dress, and he took off his pants and he did what her first Massa had done, only he wasn't so rough and it was all over

very quickly. He made her swear never to tell anyone else about it, and he called her to his office every few days after that, and did it to her again.

The other women knew because he'd done it to all of them as well, and they told the ways to get rid of a baby if one came along. But Annie didn't listen to them, because she wasn't going to have a baby by a white Massa. She hated them all too much, and she knew what herbs and grasses to eat that would keep a baby away.

She also put a curse on her new Massa, but it didn't seem to work at first. Then one night there was a fire in the warehouse and most of the cloth was burned, and some of the looms. She was sold away again, this time to a big plantation where they needed someone to do the weaving.

This Massa was quite good to her, and the overseer, because she was good at her job, and kept herself to herself, and didn't make trouble. She never became friends with any of the other slave women because they were a little scared of her. They knew she could make magic because she cured a baby boy who was sick with a cough. She built a special fire of strange-smelling herbs in his shack and made him smell the smoke, and he got better.

After that the young girls came to her when they needed cures, or a potion or a spell to make someone love them, but she would never put a curse on anyone for them, because that was her special gift, and she reserved it for herself.

She was indescribably lonely. She longed for some company, some contact with another human being, and for a while she had an affair with a field hand, but he was suspicious of her power, and married someone else. Her reputation for being gifted spread throughout the plantation, until eventually even

the overseer and the Massa heard about it, and they made jokes about her, and teased her to do magic for them.

The Massa's wife, the Missy, didn't tease her though. When her daughter was

sick with the whooping cough, she came to Annie, and begged her to make the child well. Annie built her fire of special herbs and sticks, and made the child smell the smoke, and slowly, over the next two weeks, she got better.

After that the Missy came to Annie whenever any of her children were sick.

Sometimes Annie could help and sometimes she couldn't, but she was always honest with the Missy, because she knew the limit of her own knowledge and power.

She might have been happy at that plantation, except that people, white or black, came to her only when they wanted some healing. Otherwise, they seemed frightened of her, and left her alone.

The young Massa, the Massa's son, was a boy when Annie first came to the plantation, but he had grown up, and was a young man now. He started spending time with Annie, and even though he laughed about her skills, she thought him kind. Then one night he came to her and ordered her to get undressed, and he raped her. She knew she was his first woman, and so she was inclined to forgive him, but then he started laughing at her, and telling everyone how he had been broken in with the witch.

So she put a curse on him. Two months later, he was bitten by a cottonmouth when he was swimming naked in the river. Everyone knew he died from the snakebite, but no one believed it was natural, because she was a witch.

Young Massa had said so. 01' Massa got very angry, and ordered the overseer to beat her, but not to mark her skin. He stripped her naked and hit her with a wooden bat. She had livid bruises for weeks afterward, but he was clever and did not break the skin. When she was healed, ol' Massa called for the auctioneer and sent her to the block.

They took her by cart to a big city, and to some long, low brick buildings, where a hundred other slaves were locked in iron cages. They put her in a cage and gave her bread and cornmeal to eat. Some of the other slaves tried to be friendly to her, but she didn't talk to them because she was scared of

other people. She heard that there was to be an auction soon, and over the next few days lots of Massas came to inspect what was being offered. A lot of the Massas were interested in her, because she was very beautiful, but she made a chant, to stop anyone buying her.

On the day before the sale, a black man came in, very fashionably dressed, a house nigger, she guessed. He looked at all the slaves, and then he came to her pen, and looked at her for a very long time, without saying anything, and she felt an odd feeling, for the first time in her life, that this man would never hurt her. He tried to talk to her, and she didn't say very much in case she was wrong, but she didn't make her chant.

The man went away and came back a little while later with his Massa. They talked about her and asked her some questions, and she gave them honest answers. They asked about her weaving, and she pointed to her simple skirt, which was of her own cloth. They felt the texture of the material and inspected the weave. They made her turn round and take off her bodice, and inspected her skin for scars of a lashing, but there were none. As they were taking their leave, the house nigger turned back to her and smiled.

She went to the block the next day, and a few Massas bid for her, but then suddenly the Massa with the house nigger made a bid that was much higher than anyone else's and everyone gasped in astonishment. She was sold to him. The Massa came to her, and told her he was sorry that she would have to stay here for a few days until transport could be set up, but he made arrangements to have her moved to the auctioneer's own slave quarters, which were a little more comfortable, and she wasn't barred in.

I She guessed that her new Massa must be very rich, because when the slave cart came for her, there were four other black men, field hands, in it, and a lighter-skinned man who was immaculately dressed. He said his name was Parson Dick, and he spoke differently from the others, almost like a Massa. Four slave catchers had been employed to take them to their new plantation, and they traveled for four days, staying in the slave quarters of cheap inns at night. To her surprise, they weren't chained at any time.

"New Massa said not," Parson Dick told her.

Not that she, or anyone, could have escaped. One of the slave catchers was always on guard, and they had guns.

Besides, where would she escape to?

At the end of the fourth day they came to a fine plantation, with fields ready, although no cotton had been planted. There was a big mansion on a hill at the end of the drive, but it wasn't finished yet. Workmen were putting glass in the windows, and slate on the roof, and the grounds around it were still wild, and not yet a garden.

They were delivered to the overseer, a middle-aged man called Evans, and he warned them that he would not tolerate troublemakers or runaways. For all his bluster, Annie didn't think he was a very strong man, and the field hands sniggered softly when he turned his back to greet the Massa.

The Massa welcomed them, and told them he expected them to work hard, but that if they did he would treat them well. The house nigger was with him, smiling, Annie thought, at her.

The overseer took them to the slave quarters, a collection of newly built huts around a clearing, and assigned them their places. As they walked there, the house nigger walked with them, and pointed out the Massa's log cabin, in a field behind the big house, and said he'd be moving into the big house next month.

Annie's room was as good as any she had ever had, small and bare, with a small window, a chair and a bunk, but it had the smell of new timber, and that pleased her.

The house nigger came with the Missy, and she was very kind, and said she would organize some new clothes for Annie, who had only the dress she wore. She admired the weave of that dress, and said she hoped that Annie would be happy making lovely cloth for them.

The Missy left, but the house nigger stayed

The Missy left, but the house nigger stayed.

“I’s Cap’n Jack,” he said. “I’s the Massa man.”

Annie shrugged.

“Ain’t nuttin’ to be afeared of here,” he said. “Ain’t no one to hurt you here. “

Annie shrugged again. She always got hurt, eventually.

Cap’n Jack stared at her for a few moments, then told her he’d come by to see her again soon and left.

Annie sat down on the bunk and stared at the place that was to be her new home.

Some people at her old plantation said she had the gift of second sight, but although she could see the future, it wasn’t true. It was simply that Annie knew that nothing good was ever going to happen to her.

18

Cap’n Jack was fascinated by Annie from the first moment he saw her. A sad, silent woman in a pen at the slave market, she seemed filled with dark secrets, and some inner pain that Cap’n Jack guessed came from beating or rape, or from being sold away from her family. She bore her grief with such quiet dignity that Cap’n Jack wanted to take her into his arms and hold her, and never let anyone hurt her again.

He told James about her, and that she was a weaver, and James’s eyes glinted with a spark of an idea that he wouldn’t reveal to Cap’n Jack. They went to

Annie and inspected her, and James was impressed. Cap'n Jack was pleased to see that she bore no scars from the lash on her back, but knew that some Massas had subtler ways of inflicting punishment. The following day, at the auction, there was some bidding for Annie, but then James surprised everyone by offering a price well above the highest bid. Cap'n Jack looked at him in surprise, but James only shrugged.

"She can do the weaving," he said.

When they got back to The Forks, James told his builders he wanted a weaving house, and put Cap'n Jack in charge of it. Cap'n Jack went to the slave quarters to pick out a site, but it was for Annie, and he wanted to keep her apart from the others.

There was a small grove of oaks halfway between the big house and the slave quarters, with a clearing in the middle, just large enough for a small house. This was the spot that

Cap'n Jack chose. Here, Annie would be half hidden from the world. James approved of his choice and ordered a loom from Atlanta.

The new slaves were delivered a few days later, and were greeted by Evans, the foreman. Evans had been with James in Nashville, and was really an overseer, but James didn't like the title. Evans was gruff and shouted a lot, but was not really a strong man. Cap'n Jack doubted that he was the right man for the new job. In Nashville they'd had only forty slaves on the plantation, including the house niggers, and here there would be nearly a hundred working in the fields, and several more in the house.

Evans organized the field hands, and Cap'n Jack was left in charge of Annie and the new butler, Parson Dick.

He took Annie to a hut, and tried to talk to her, but she only shrugged.

Whatever her hurt was, Cap'n Jack knew it would take time to heal. He went outside and Parson Dick made himself comfortable on a log, waiting to be told where to go. They were pressed for space. The big house wasn't ready, the Massa and his family were crowded into the log cabin, and not all the new slave quarters had been finished. In the end Cap'n Jack suggested that Parson Dick bunk in with him. The butler made a bit of a fuss, saying that things had been different at his old plantation, but it was either Cap'n Jack's hut or the shed with the field hands, so Parson Dick saw reason.

Parson Dick settled in and washed at the well. He was finicky about his personal cleanliness, and had not been able to wash properly at the slave market, nor on the road. He asked to be taken on a tour of the new house and to meet his staff, so Cap'n Jack conducted him through the nearly finished mansion, and introduced him to old Crosspatch, the cook who had come with them from Nashville, and her new young assistant, Julie. Parson Dick thanked Cap'n Jack and dismissed him, saying he would like to talk to the Missy next. Cap'n Jack was not used to being given orders by other slaves, but saw the sense of it and went to find Sally. Parson Dick settled at the kitchen table with Crosspatch and Julie and told them how he intended to run the house. Crosspatch, who had a short

temper, flared, but Parson Dick told her he was in charge and if she didn't like it she could complain to the Massa. Julie giggled.

Cap'n Jack found Sally but she had some other jobs for him, for the furniture was starting to arrive from Charleston, and the new drapes and rugs. It was all in crates, for it had come from Europe, and so they stored it all in one of the back rooms in the house until they took possession. It was nearly midnight when Cap'n Jack finished his work, but that was not unusual these days. Ever since the Massa had bought the land and then got sick, Cap'n Jack had been in charge of many of the preparations for the new house.

He went past Annie's hut on the way to his own, but the candle was out, and he guessed she was asleep. He hoped the angels would guard her, and went to

his own hut, where Parson Dick pumped him for two hours about the Jackson family, until Cap'n Jack fell asleep, fully clothed, on his bunk.

He woke at cockcrow, washed at the well, and saw Annie in line for her food. He greeted her, and told her she had no work to do until the loom arrived, but could make herself useful cleaning up in the house. She nodded and was pleasant, but otherwise ignored his existence. Cap'n Jack had his meals in the kitchen of the big house, which was the first part of the building to be completed, and ate his breakfast listening to Crosspatch's complaints about the new butler. She was particularly aggrieved this day, because Missy Sally had sided with Parson Dick on some matter of the menus, but Cap'n Jack ignored her. Crosspatch was always complaining.

It was another chaotic day. The builders were Scrambling to finish the house, Sally was trying to move furniture into rooms that weren't ready, Micah and Tiara were looking after the children, Ephraim was running round the stables getting ready for the horses which were soon to arrive, and everyone wanted something from Cap'n Jack.

As he walked back from the stables, Cap'n Jack saw Evans charging around on his horse organizing work gangs to plant the new season's cotton.

The new field hands were a crew of fine and able-bodied men, but, strangers to the Jackson household, had no special loyalty to their new Massa, and were testing the limits of the foreman's temper and ability to control..

"There gwine be trouble," Cap'n Jack said to himself, but it was not his business, and Missy Sally was calling him to help talk sense to the gardeners.

He hardly saw Annie that day, but after his evening meal he filched a couple of pieces of fried chicken from the plate and took them to her.

She was sitting in her hut staring at nothing, and humming some odd chant to herself.

“Got some chicken,” Cap’n Jack said.

She took the chicken without thanks, and ate it with a surprising daintiness.

Cap’n Jack squatted on his haunches and waited till she had done. There was silence for a while.

“It was a purty song you was humming,” Cap’n Jack said.

“African,” Annie shrugged. “It from Africa.”

“That where you from?”

“No,” Annie said.

He asked a few more questions, but she only responded with a yes or a no, or a shrug, and then he heard Parson Dick calling him, so he bade her good night, and went to find out what the matter was.

He saw her every evening after that, and always took her some nice scraps of food from the main kitchen. She took the food but never thanked him, and responded to his questions simply. He told her of his life, but she didn’t seem interested. He told her of how he had come to Massa Jackson, but she didn’t seem to care. He told her of the promise offreedorn the Massa had given him, and then she spoke.

“Ain’t never gwine happen,” she said.

Cap’n Jack told her she was wrong, that Massa James was different from other Massas, but she only shrugged.

“All Massas the same,” she said.

Cap’n Jack felt cheered. At least she had started to take part in the conversations, even if it was on a negative note.

A few days later the new loom was delivered, and Cap’n Jack had it set up in Annie’s hut. It was enormous and almost filled the little room, but they had no

other place to put it until the weaving house was ready.

Now, for the first time, Annie showed interest in something.

She traced her fingers along the wooden frame of the loom, and sat in front of it, and tested its span with her arms. It was an excellent piece of equipment, the finest that could be had, for James was not stinting on anything for The Forks of Cypress.

Annie began setting up the lines for the warps, and seemed to have forgotten Cap'n Jack was there.

"I , s need yam," she said after a while.

"Tell me what yo' want, I get it for yo'," Cap'n Jack replied.

She asked what cloth she was to make first, and then gave him her list and he went to organize it. When he came back, she was sitting at her empty loom, as if it was her natural home.

The yam came, and she started weaving. Cap'n Jack loved to watch her. She worked gracefully, elegantly, shuttling the bobbin to and fro with a natural rhythm, patient in her labors, and as she worked, she hummed odd and lilting melodies that seemed to be from another place and time, and lovely cloth began to reveal itself, out of the complexity of wood and string and bundles of yam.

Mostly, she worked during the day, but Cap'n Jack could come to her only in the evenings, and she took to weaving when he was there. She seldom spoke, but listened to everything he had to say, while she chanted and made cloth.

After a while he would fall silent and just watch her, enchanted by her easy grace, and lulled by the sweet songs she sang. Cap'n Jack was happy in her company, and slowly it dawned on him that she was as happy with him. In the winter he got sick and she nursed him, with herbs and strange potions.

He got better. He began bringing his food from the kitchen, to cat with her, and always had enough for both of them. When the weaving house was ready, he supervised the moving of the loom, and found her some simple furniture, a bed and a table and a couple of old rocking chairs that the builders had used and didn't need anymore.

He helped furnish the big house, too. At last it was ready, six months late, and they unpacked the crates and for the first time he saw what James and Sally had bought. The drapes were

velvet and the rugs were intricately patterned and came from a place called Persia. The chandeliers were crystal, and some held over a hundred candles.

The furniture was beautiful, mahogany and teak and cedar, hand-carved in Europe. The new cutlery was silver, and the crockery was of fine china from England, with a pattern especially designed for James Jackson. The beds were magnificent four-posters, heavy and solid, with flowers and birds and small animals carved on the wooden posts, and canopies of brocade and damask.

The floors were polished until they shone like mirrors, and the rugs looked even more beautiful against them. Parson Dick, who knew a very great deal about a lot of things, told him that the weavers deliberately made a flaw in every carpet, because only the God they believed in could create something perfect. The dining table was long and gleamed with beeswax, and could accommodate twenty people without seeming crowded. The dining chairs were high-backed, and had tapestry covers. The paintings that adorned the walls were old and in heavy gilt frames, but then James commissioned a traveling artist to make portraits of all his family.

When the house was finished, relations and visitors came from all over the South to see the wonder of it. James was a state senator now, and politicians and businessmen and their wives, and the governor of the state, and even some

politicians from Washington, the capital, all came to see the wonder that was The Forks of Cypress.

Shortly afterward they had a party, a housewarming and a christening, because Sally had given birth to another son, and he was called James Jackson III in honor of his father. Everyone agreed that the name was right and proper, but laughed at the confusion it would cause. If they called the father's name, would the boy come running, or if they spoke to the boy, would the father respond?

James and Sally toyed with nicknames for him. Sara and Eleanor were keen on Jamie, which had been James's pet name in Ireland, but the parents thought he should have his own identity. For a few days they tried Jimmy, because of Sara's late husband, but it didn't suit him.

The registrar of births solved the problem. He was a punctilious clerk from England, neat and fastidious, and trained in

the old ways. When he wrote the new boy's name in the book, in the most elegant copper plate hand, he 'did not write "James," but rather the formal English abbreviation, "Jas."

It amused James, and he began calling his son "Jas." After a while everyone adopted it, but because it looked a little odd when it was written down, they added another letter to it, and so James Jackson, the son of James Jackson who was the son of James Jackson, became known simply as Jass.

The christening was a splendid affair, held on the new lawn in front of the house, near the magnolia tree, which had grown several feet since James and Andrew first planted it. Nearby there was a wigwam, which James had provided for an Indian family, but none wanted to live there, and so the children used it for play. A.J. pretended he was a great chief, and tormented his older sisters, and the slave children.

Eleanor and Thomas Kirkman from Nashville came with their son Tom, who was a young man now, and was engaged to Sally's first daughter, Elizabeth. Sara

came with her boys, and John Coffee, who had a fine plantation near Florence, with his family.

Politicians and influential men were there in abundance, and while they enjoyed the celebration, their conversations, which they kept from the women, were all about the recent sensational case of Denmark Vesey.

A free black who lived in Charleston, Vesey had plotted with other blacks, slaves, to rebel against the whites, and had somehow amassed guns for the purpose. A nervous maid had discovered the guns, and the plot was revealed.

Vesey and thirty-seven of his followers were executed.

It was not the first example of insurrection by blacks. Many of the men present could remember the bloody revolution on the Caribbean island of Santo Domingo, when the armies of the black general Toussaint L'Ouverture massacred the French and took control of the island. Or the Gabriel rebellion, much closer to home, in Richmond, Virginia. In each instance, the rebellions had eventually been bloodily suppressed, and new and even more stringent laws were introduced against the blacks.

It was happening now, in Charleston. A law had been

passed that any free blacks arriving as crew on ships were not permitted to land, but had to be kept on board as long as the ship was in harbor, at the captain's expense. The law was taking its toll of sea traffic into Charleston, but the Southerners considered this a small price to pay for their security. Throughout the slaveholding states discipline had increased and punishment for any infringement been made more severe. Armed patrols to discourage runaways had been introduced, in addition to the regular slave catchers.

James had his own problems with this matter. Many of his new field hands were troublesome, and there had been a few instances of slaves running away. It angered James. He thought he was a benevolent Massa, and regarded the slaves

as ungrateful, and their actions threatening to his wealth and position. It was clear to him that Evans, the foreman, could not control such large numbers, and, regretfully, had to be replaced.

He spoke with John Coffee, who was pleased. Coffee had always regarded James as overly lenient with his slaves, and thought that perhaps with his new wealth and position to protect, and his outstanding plantation, James had found some backbone.

"Someone with a strong sense of discipline?" John Coffee asked.

"Whatever is necessary," James agreed.

Coffee thought he knew just the man. Egbert Harris had served under him against the Creek, and at New Orleans. He was working as an overseer on a small plantation in Georgia, but was anxious to find a situation closer to his home, in Nashville. John Coffee promised to investigate the matter for James.

By tacit agreement among the men, there was no discussion of slaves, slavery, or the Vesey plot with the women, and James spent a pleasant afternoon circulating among the guests and receiving their congratulations for his new son and his new house, and his new political career.

He was introduced to William Perkins, who was looking to buy land in the district. William Perkins was small, studious, and almost permanently worried. He was married to an am-

bitious woman whose given name was Pocahontas, but who preferred to be called Becky. It was the Perkinses' personal tragedy that neither of their two babies had lived, and they blamed the fierce coastal humidity of South Carolina. Becky was pregnant again, and William, having caught the Florence fever, hoped that the move inland would benefit his wife and coming child.

James was flattered by his attention and amused by his constant anxiety.

He had recently bought two more small plantations, in Florida and Mississippi, and gave William some basic advice. William hung on every word, jotted down notes, and would not leave his side. James spied his nephew, Tom Kirkman, who was moving to Florence when he married Elizabeth, to work for James. He introduced the two men, and told Tom to look after William.

That evening there was a fine family dinner. James, at the head of the table, and Sally, opposite to him, were surrounded by loving relatives.

They started to tell tales of the old days in Ireland, and then sang songs and toasted the martyrs, Oliver Bond and Lord Edward, the Sheares brothers and Wolfe Tone.

“Erin go bragh!” they shouted, although they were a long way from Erin.

“And Sean,” James said, raising his glass. He was already a little drunk.

No one else knew whom he meant, but toasted Sean anyway, and drank the health of the new baby, Jass, and welcomed A.J., who was attending his first formal dinner, to the clan.

It was midnight when they went to bed. Cap’n Jack, who had been on his feet since dawn, was dozing in his Massa’s dressing room when James came in. He woke with a start, helped James undress, and was genially dismissed for the evening.

Cap’n Jack didn’t go to his own hut, for that was not his routine. He went to the weaving house, as he did every evening, to be with Annie for a few minutes. Her candle was still burning, and she was sitting at the loom, weaving and humming one of her strange songs. She didn’t speak or acknowledge his presence, but he knew she was pleased he was there, and that she had been waiting for him.

He sat in a rocking chair and did not speak.

“What’s wrong?” she said softly.

He didn’t reply, and when she turned around to look at him, she saw he was dozing. She woke him gently and told him to lie on the bed. He was too tired to argue, and did as he was bidden. Annie went back to the loom, to her cloth and her humming, and Cap’n Jack drifted to sleep listening to the lovely lullaby.

When he awoke a few hours later he was puzzled, because he wasn’t sure where he was, and knew he was not alone. He realized that Annie had crawled onto the bed beside him, fully clothed, and was curled in the crook of his arm, fast asleep.

It felt right and natural to him that she was there, and wonderful, and his heart was golden. He didn’t stir, but turned his head gently so he could see her better.

The moonlight traced in through the window, and a wayward moonbeam shimmered over Annie’s face. She slept peacefully, with no hint on her face of the pain that she would not discuss with Cap’n Jack.

The soft light of dawn replaced the moon, and Cap’n Jack lay motionless beside Annie, wide awake, staring at his love, and caressed by her gentle breathing.

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When Cap’n Jack and Annie got married, James gave them a splendid wedding party, because Andrew was running for president.

Annie had been reluctant to accept Cap’n Jack’s proposal. After his first night with her, when nothing had happened between them, Cap’n Jack slept in the weaving house regularly, with Annie. As they got to know each other better, and felt secure with each other, a physical relationship developed. It was something

that they both wanted and needed, just as they wanted each other in all aspects of their lives. They made no

plans for a future, but accepted what they had now, and it was precious to them. For the first time in her life, Annie started to trust a man and she even stopped taking her special herbs and grasses to prevent a child, because she began to want a baby by Cap'n Jack. She still doubted the future, but lived, as she had always done, for the day.

She became pregnant. For a while she thought of doing something to herself to change her condition, but then she realized that the innocent thing inside her had become all of her hope. If it was a boy child, he could be raised in his father's image, as a man who was caring to women.

If it was a girl child, she would have the life that Annie had never had, a life without fear of men, secure in the love of both her parents. Even if anything were to happen to Annie, and she fully expected her happiness not to last, Cap'n Jack would love and nurture the child.

She told Cap'n Jack of her condition, and he immediately proposed marriage, as she had known she would. She was puzzled that she had told him of the pregnancy, because she had no ready answer for his question.

Marriage seemed very permanent to her, and Annie did not believe in permanence. Cap'n Jack wooed her beautifully, and did not press her, but presented all his arguments patiently. He courted her, and made her feel as if he were asking her to give herself, unlike other men, who simply took her.

Eventually, because she could think of no good argument against him, and because in her heart she wanted to be married to him, she accepted him, and the look on his face, of simple, unalloyed joy, made her glad.

Cap'n Jack told James, who immediately gave his consent. The slave then asked his Massa for a privilege. He wanted a proper wedding, and he wanted his old friend Alfred to be his best man. James said that he would write to Andrew and request permission for Alfred to come. Cap'n Jack asked him one more

favor.

"Annie ain't got no pappy," he said. "You her Massa, you her pappy. Will you give her away?"

James was moved. The whole question of slavery had been exercising his mind recently. The South was still quivering with righteous indignation and latent fear from the Vesey plot,

and several states had sharpened their laws against blacks. Many in the North were complaining of the treatment of the slaves, and the South was closing ranks against their outrage. At the same time, James was having continuing problems with his own field hands. They were truculent and troublesome; three more had run away, and one had never been found. Evans was worse than useless, and had indicated his readiness to step down, but John Coffee had not yet heard from Egbert Harris.

Cap'n Jack's request began to put the whole issue into perspective for him. He was father to his black children. They were an extension of his family, and he treated them well, if sternly, as he would his own family.

There could be no better example of his relationship with the best of his slaves, in these troubled times, than the public admission of his role.

He would be delighted to give Annie away.

He wrote to Andrew requesting that Alfred be Cap'n Jack's best man, and to his surprise, Andrew replied in person, rather than by letter.

He came to The Forks, unannounced, to see James. He brought Alfred with him, and immediately gave his consent to Alfred's role in the coming wedding. Andrew greeted Sally warmly, and the children, and insisted they call him Uncle Andrew. He brought greetings from Rachel, who was ailing and not able to

Andrew. He brought greetings from Rachel, who was ailing and not able to travel, and told them the news of his sons. He met Jass for the first time, and played happily with the infant for a while, and then told A.J. war stories, and acted out the battle of New Orleans for the wide-eyed boy.

James and Sally watched from the veranda, as General Andrew chased around the garden after A.J., who had been cast as the British Army.

"I wonder what he wants," Sally said softly, and James laughed.

"I'm sure you can guess," he said.

Andrew had a pleasant dinner with James and Sally, and was at his most charming. He described the new house he was building for Rachel to replace the older, smaller Hermitage. He told them all the gossip of the political world, and some of the intrigues that had caused him to resign as governor of Florida.

"It was for the best," he said. "Rachel found the climate abominable. "

He kept his temper under control and joked about his political opponents.

"Shook them all when I retired," he laughed. "No one believed me."

"I'm not surprised," Sally said with a charming smile. "You're much too young to retire."

"I fully intended it," Andrew said. "I was tired. I was sick. I was not fit to be president.

There was a soft silence.

"You have changed your mind?" James asked him.

There was another silence.

"Yes," Andrew said. "I have changed my mind."

Sally excused herself, and Parson Dick brought port to the table. Andrew helped himself to a liberal measure.

“The country needs me,” Andrew said. “We go to rack and ruin. The bureaucracy gets larger and fouler and more corrupt by the day, and the tentacles of government are reaching farther and farther into our lives, until they will strangle us.’ I

It was the old cry, not only of Andrew, but of Thomas Jefferson.

“We are in debt,” Andrew said, warming to his theme. James began to feel as if he were a crowd of a thousand, and Andrew was on a soapbox.

“How can a country as rich as ours be in debt?” Andrew demanded.

“The war?” James offered mildly, but Andrew snorted in derision.

“The war is an excuse,” he said, close to shouting now. “It is the departments and committees and subcommittees that keep us broke-us, the poor simple farmers who pay for Washington’s excess.”

James tried hard not to smile. Andrew was certainly a farmer, but he was not poor, and very far from simple.

“And that bank!” Andrew sighed heavily. The central government bank was his special black beast. “They lend money freely when we don’t need it, and foreclose on our mortgages when times are bad.”

James thought that this was the practice of all banks, but it was true that the central bank favored the rich, and especially the industrializing North.

Andrew poured more port, and then smiled.

“But you know all this; we have discussed it so often,” he said.

“So the time has come?” James asked.

“The time has come,” Andrew agreed. “Not that I want it, no, by the eternal, I had as lief stay where I am, with my lovely Rachel and darling boys. But what can I do?”

James understood it was a rhetorical question, and had no need of a reply. Andrew would do what he had intended to do all along. In any case, it was all nonsense. Andrew’s “retirement” was a fiction. He had been elected to the Senate in Washington, and spent more than half of each year there.

“The state legislature in Tennessee will formally nominate me for the presidency,” Andrew said.

He paused for a moment.

“I want your help in Alabama.”

I want your help. These were the sweetest words that Andrew had ever said to James. I want your help. The old lion, the hero of New Orleans, the greatest general since Washington, needed James’s help. Through all the years that he had walked in Andrew’s shadow, James had waited for this moment. His political power seemed almost tangible to him.

“Anything I can do,” James responded graciously. “You know you have only to ask.”

Andrew nodded his head as graciously, and they got down to business.

He wanted James to use all his political influence to persuade the government of Alabama to nominate him for the presidency.

“I will propose the motion myself,” James agreed.

Andrew was sure he would get a good popular vote, but in case there was a doubt, and the matter had to be resolved in the House of Representatives, he wanted James to start drumming up support for him.

“You know far more people in Washington than I,- James said truthfully, but

Andrew knew how to flatter his man.

“Your influence is more substantial than you imagine,” he said. “Your opinion is well respected.”

And he wanted money for his campaign.

“I thought we’d never get to it,” James said, and laughed, to soften it.

Andrew had the grace to smile, but was not altogether pleased by James’s levity.

They talked until late, about Andrew’s aspirations for himself and the country, and they talked of the old days. The drunker Andrew got, the longer his speeches about his glorious military career became.

Alfred sat in the kitchen with Cap’n Jack, while Parson Dick dozed in a corner, in case his Massa should ring. Alfred was enchanted by Annie.

He was unmarried, and longed to find a bride.

“Dump this ol’ buzzard, an’ take me instead,” he said with a chuckle, and Annie smiled, and shook her head.

Alfred wished them both well, and told Annie stories of the old days in Nashville, and of the fun they’d had, and of their rowdy Massas.

It was a new world for Annie. She was with men whom she liked and trusted, and they talked about their Massas with affection, but with a sense that they saw all the foibles and weaknesses of the men who owned them. They hated their slavery but had no alternative to it.

“Them niggers runnin’ away,” Cap’n Jack said, talking of the several

runaways from The Forks. “Where they gwine go?”

“Henry got away,” Annie said, of the slave who had run away and never been found.

“He didn’t come back,” Cap’n Jack corrected her gently. “We don’t know he got away. As like the catchers got him and killed him.”

Alfred nodded. “Any case, I bin up South,” he said. Many of the slaves referred to the North as up South. “An’ it ain’t a whole lot differen’

there. Niggers; is still niggers.”

He changed the subject to happier things, and told them of some of the extravagant personalities he had met, with Andrew in Washington, and made them laugh. Then the bell rang, and Alfred and Cap’n Jack went to put their Massas to bed.

Sally stirred when James got into bed, but drifted back to sleep. James lay awake for a while, thinking of his conver-

sation with Andrew. He had no doubt that Andrew would win the election-he was still immensely popular with the people-and it would not hurt James to support him or loan him money. It gave him some leverage over Andrew, and, once again, it amused him to think that he would have influence with the president of the United States, What pleased him most was that Andrew thought he needed his help, and had asked for it. The world turns, James thought.

Then he had several ideas, which coalesced into one, which he thought brilliant.

He would host a fine party, here at The Forks, and would invite every person

of consequence whom he knew. At this party he would announce his intention to support Andrew's nomination. He remembered Cap'n Jack's coming wedding, and decided to give his guests some real fun. Cap'n Jack and Annie would be married at this enormous party, and the world, and his slaves, would see the benign face of slavery. They would see that it was not all beatings and lashings and rape and exploitation, but rather a unique and unrivaled management of the land and people. The South was always on the moral defensive about slavery, and James would change that.

He would take the initiative, and show everyone how the system could be used in the best interests of all the people, white and black.

The more he thought about it the more extravagant the party became, and the more successful his position, and he went to sleep with a big smile on his face that was only partly caused by the amount of port he had drunk.

Annie hated the idea when Cap'n Jack told her. She didn't want all that fuss. She didn't want all those people staring at her. She wanted a quiet ceremony, in which she and Cap'n Jack jumped over the broom into the land of matrimony, as her mammy's mammy had done. As all slaves did. But she had no choice in the matter. Her Massa had decreed it.

Of all the many fine functions given at The Forks of Cypress, the wedding of Cap'n Jack and Annie was one of the finest. Three hundred guests attended, and the Southerners brought their slaves, so that nearly five hundred people saw the couple wed. Andrew was in Washington, but he sent Al-

fred with Richard Coll, his aide from Florida, who was said to be sweet on Eleanor's daughter, Mary.

Annie was nervous, but looked lovely, in a dress that Sally had helped her choose, and they giggled about her full belly. Cap'n Jack looked splendid in new

clothes provided by James. James's daughters Mary, Martha, and Mary Ellen attended Annie, and little Sassy was a flower girl. A.J., looking very smart, stayed with Sally, and Tiara nursed Jass. At the end of the ceremony, the couple jumped over the broom into the land of matrimony, and everyone cheered. Even Annie smiled then.

A vast buffet was laid out on the lawn, and tables of food for the slaves at the side of the house. Slave catchers were employed to make sure that none of the visiting slaves ran away, and the field hands were given half a day off and allowed to watch from a distance. In any case it was fall, and the harvest had been picked.

After everyone had eaten, they gathered to hear James make a speech. He praised Cap'n Jack and Annie, and said how proud he was of them, and that this day represented proof positive to the Northerners that slavery was ultimtely a benevolent institution. He talked about his dear friend Andrew Jackson, and his slave Alfred, who was best man at this very wedding, and went on to announce his support for the candidacy of Andrew Jackson for the presidency. He was wildly applauded.

The fiddlers struck up the tune, and there was dancing. James and Sally mingled with their guests, renewing old friendships, greeting acquaintances. James's nephew Tom Kirkman was there with Elizabeth, Sally's daughter by her first husband, and they were planning their own wedding.

"Not another," James laughed. "I can't afford it!"

William Perkins was there, whom James hardly remembered until Tom reminded him. Perkins had bought a property in Florence, and was full of gratitude to James and Tom.

John Coffee was there, with his family, and a man James didn't know. He was introduced as Egbert Harris.

"Told you I'd find you an overseer," John Coffee said to James. "This man's one of the best."

They shook hands, and talked brietly, and agreed to meet again later, when the guests had gone.

At the side of the house, the slaves had their own party, and made their own music, and had a high old time.

But James did not.

Full of good cheer toward the world, he talked with some of his political friends, and was surprised to discover the amount of antagonism that existed toward the idea of Andrew as president.

Andrew was uncouth, hot-tempered, and unpredictable. James could only agree.

Andrew was a dueler and a street brawler. James could only agree.

He had antagonized the Spanish in Florida. James could only agree.

He had antagonized Britain, which was the South’s major trading partner.

James could only agree.

He would destroy the central bank and allow the individual state banks to flourish without control. James could only agree.

He had no experience in administration. James could only agree.

He was ruthless in his dealings with the Indians. James could only agree.

He had obtained his Indian treaties illegally, sometimes, perhaps often, with bribes.

James’s blood ran cold.

How did anyone know?

He left the party in a foul mood, and went to his study. He heard a tiny voice of doubt, like the whisper of wind in the trees before a storm.

Had he backed the wrong man?

He shook the doubts aside. Of course Andrew would win; the public adored him.

But did they?

They admired him-as a hero, a general, a soldier-but would they vote for him as president?

In the South, almost certainly, but in the North he was known to be rabidly against industry, which was the life blood of the New England states. He venerated the simple fanner, but believed in untrammeled capitalism, which sometimes destroyed the farmers whose cause he espoused. He was also a slaveholder, and dedicated to the expansion of the number of

slave states, which the New Englanders fiercely resented.

Even if the public did vote for him, they might not vote in sufficient numbers, and if the election had to be decided in the House of Representatives, James could not swear to the outcome. For the first time, he understood why Andrew had come to him for help.

He cursed himself for a fool, for not thinking things over before he had so rashly allied himself to Andrew's cause. The damage was done; he was committed, but he would tread very carefully from now on. And he would ask Sally's opinion.

There was a tap on the door, and Egbert Harris came in.

"Sorry to bother you," he said. "But there's been trouble, with your slaves."

James was astonished.

“A couple of ‘em got hold of some liquor and started a fight,” Harris explained. “I guess it was a setup, because in the fuss another two tried to run away.”

James was furious. On this day, of all days, after all he had done for them.

“Damned niggers!” he cried. “After all I’ve done for them. “

Evans, he knew, would be useless. “Get the slave catchers,” he shouted.

“Get the bloodhounds.”

Egbert Harris smiled.

“No need,” he said. “I took the liberty. They didn’t get far. One of ‘em’s a bit of a bloody mess. He won’t try running away again for a while.”

James wasn’t sure what to say, but thanked Harris, and asked him his terms.

The money was quickly settled. The conditions took a little longer. Harris wanted total authority over the slaves, the permission to enforce discipline the way he saw it, and no questions asked. In return he guaranteed productivity.

“Though it’ll take me a while,” he said, “to bring ‘em into line. Things have been lax around here.”

James nodded. If the slaves had chosen this day, of all days, to run away, then things were in a worse state than he had suspected. He was filled with disappointment, and agreed to Harris’s conditions.

“And the house niggers,” Harris said.

James thought for a moment.

“Those who work in the house are valued and trusted, and have been with me many years,” he said.

Harris shrugged. “Have it your way. Don’t blame me if things go wrong.”

He was rough and forthright, and James wasn’t sure that he liked him, but he had no alternative. If the slaves needed discipline, then discipline there would be. It was agreed that Harris would commence with James in three months, after he had squared things with his present employer and gone home to Nashville to see his family.

They shook hands, and Harris excused himself. James sat at his desk, furious with himself about Andrew, and the wretched ingratitude of his slaves. Then he remembered who he was. One of the richest men in the state, of enormous influence, and a state senator. He was a powerful man.

He would start to use his power. Even Andrew Jackson had come to him for help.

Egbert Harris started work as overseer at The Forks of Cypress three months later, as agreed.

Shortly before his arrival, Annie delivered a girt child to the doting Cap’n Jack, and they called her Easter, because she was born on the day of resurrection.

20

Sally tried to block her ears to the screams, She hated it when the slaves were whipped. She hated Harris for doing it, and hated the fact that it was necessary. In the first few weeks of his tenure, Harris had a whipping block made at the slave quarters, and instituted a regime of ruthless punishment for the slightest offenses. Every few days, it seemed, Harris would find reason to have one of the slaves flogged, and for the first time Sally heard, on a regular basis, the primal sounds that are

sounds that are

made by a human being in unendurable agony, and she couldn't bear the screams.

She demanded that the block be moved to some location farther from the house because it was giving the children nightmares, and Harris had reluctantly acceded. It didn't make any difference. The pitiful cries of the victims still reached the house, and Sally began taking the children out, on picnics to the river, or into town, when she knew a flogging had been ordered.

She could not understand why it had all gone so wrong. As a girl she had been brought up with slavery, and believed in its necessity. On her father's estate, some slaves had been flogged occasionally, for serious offenses, and she hated it then but accepted it as a fact of life. In Nashville, when she married James, there had been very little trouble with the slaves, and Evans had maintained an easy discipline, by use of the switch or the rod or, on one occasion, selling away a young troublemaker, but otherwise she had thought the people happy.

When the mansion was being built, the workers had not caused any trouble.

They seemed to take pride in their craft, and their foremen kept them in line.

But from the moment they had bought the new field hands and started planting the new fields, everything had changed. In her own mind, Sally blamed it on the Denmark Vesey plot, which had caused considerable discussion in the slave ranks, and the runaways had begun then. She believed, as James did, that Evans did not have the necessary authority to enforce discipline in these difficult times, and while she disliked Harris, and bitterly regretted the necessity of employing him, she saw no alternative.

Her heart bled for James, who had worked so hard to achieve his ambitions; she blessed those slaves who were loyal to them, and she pitied and despised those slaves who were the troublemakers. She examined her attitude to slavery, and believed at the core of her being that it was the best possible institution for the welfare of the black people, who, like children, were not fitted to survive in

the jungle of the white world. She allowed that there were several intelligent and literate blacks, and several who had done well for themselves as free men, mostly in the North, but they were the exceptions

that proved the rule. She worried if she was simply rationalizing what was finally unjustifiable because she understood that the South could not survive economically without slavery, but she also rejected the argument that slavery was cheaper than paid labor. She knew how much their slaves cost them, both in purchase price and upkeep, and the sums were astounding. Mostly, she believed in the institution because of the benefits it brought to both races.

The validity of slavery, to Sally, was that it was so simple. If only the troublemakers could understand those benefits, as so many of their house niggers did. If only the screaming would stop.

She worried about James. He was making himself physically ill with worry, and could scarcely keep control of his temper these days. She understood that it was not only because of the slaves. For some reason, James was obsessed with the matter of Andrew's election, and she guessed that something had happened to make him doubt his support of his mentor. She knew this must cost her husband dear, for Andrew was his greatest friend.

He adored the man, as a son might adore a father, and believed Andrew was partly responsible for their considerable wealth. She knew James had doubts about some of Andrew's beliefs and convictions, but she did not understand why the election was of such consuming interest to him.

Sally loved Rachel, but she didn't like Andrew. She thought him arrogant, overbearing, and selfish to a degree she had seldom encountered. He was condescending to Rachel, and she believed that he probably blamed his wife for their inability to have children of their own. She had watched Rachel change over the years, from a bright and vibrant woman to a dour and ailing recluse who seldom left the house and lived only through her vainglorious husband, and had devoted herself to his welfare and her sons, who were not her sons.

She disliked the influence that Andrew had once had over James, she was appalled by Andrew's cavalier attitude to money, and horrified by his hanging of the missionaries in Florida, and the execution of the boy, Woods, during the Creek War.

If James had finally realized that Andrew was not his best friend, if he had come to understand that Andrew was simply

using James for his own purposes, if James was able to break Andrew's spell over him, then perhaps some good would come out of this terrible time.

If only the screams would stop.

As a mother, Sally had other worries. A.J., her darling, her beloved, her firstborn son, was going away to school. A.J. had been taught by tutors, as the girls were, but now James and Sally had decided he needed to be educated in the company of other boys. There was no suitable school yet in Florence, and so he was being sent to the Stevens Academy in Nashville. He would live with Eleanor and Thomas, and Sally was sure he would be well looked after, but her mother's heart ached for her son; she would miss him dreadfully, and worry about his safety. He was only eight and far too young to be going out into the world on his own, but she was a strong woman, and boarding school was in her son's best interests. She tried to devote herself to making his last few weeks at home memorable, but the unpleasant atmosphere that began at the slave quarters pervaded the house and their lives, and she found herself constantly distracted from what she perceived as her matemal role.

If only the screams would stop.

The new overseer, Egbert Harris, loved his job, because he loved war, and he believed that keeping the niggers under control was a continuing war of attrition that he was determined to win.

He had been bom to a poor farming family, pioneers, in the Great Smokies,

and Harris's early years were unrelentingly arduous. His father scratched a living as best he could from their humble acres, and made illegal whiskey in a still in the forest to supplement their meager income. His mother's life had been one of ceaseless child raising in impossible circumstances, and half her brood had not survived infancy or their early years. Immigrants from Wales, they had trekked to the frontier in the early days, and bought their acres on the best land they could afford, putting their faith in the bounty of America. But their farm was near the Cherokee land that straddled the Georgia border, and they were subject to constant harassment by raiding parties. One of their daughters died from a Cherokee arrow.

Egbert, their third surviving son, was a tough and resourceful boy, for whom the frontier was home. He shot his first deer at seven, at nine he caught a bear in a trap, and when he was twelve he killed and scalped his first Indian. Hoping to make his way in the world, he left home when he was fifteen, and went to Knoxville, where he worked in a stable and developed his skill with horses. When he heard that Brigadier John Coffee of Nashville was looking for volunteers for the militia, to fight the British, he rode to Nashville in a day, offered his services, and was accepted.

The army became a second home to him, and he loved the life. Adept at living from the land and sleeping rough, he survived the rigors of the winter march to and from Natchez, and was promoted to sergeant. He fought in the Creek War, and revered his direct commander, Coffee, and his general, Andrew Jackson. He believed implicitly in the hierarchy of the army; he obeyed his officers and his men obeyed him, without question or demur. When a firing squad was needed to execute the mutinous boy, James Woods, Harris volunteered. The possibility of dying himself in any of the battles was of minimal concern to him. He did not believe he was going to be killed, but if he was, he would put up a heck of a fight first.

Most of all, he loved the challenge and the sense of camaraderie, and the adventure. His survival, like his fellows', depended on each individual's grit and

skill and courage, and their collective commitment to each other. The possibility of not being strong enough, of being killed, was a direct sexual challenge to him, and he would pit himself against the most formidable foe to prove that he could win. After the battle he would be in a state of high sexual arousal, flooded by the lifeforce, and then he would force himself on whatever woman was available to him-white trash, Indian, or nigra, it made no difference to him. If no women were available, he would relieve himself with his hand.

Like his commanders, he had an unshakable faith in the divinely ordained destiny of the white man to rule this land. He respected Indians as fierce warriors, and loathed their despoiling presence on what should be his. He could not understand why his father had to make do with a few scrubby acres, when these naked heathens had limitless vistas. It was his per-

sonal quest to wrest the land from the natives and give it to his family.

He saved his pay and kept his vow. Because of the land sales around Florence, the price of land near Nashville dropped to an affordable price, and he bought five fair acres. He built a log cabin with his own hands, and moved his parents down from the mountains. They managed a good life for themselves, but the farm could not support him as well, so John Coffee found him a job as assistant overseer on a small plantation in Georgia, Before long he had the top job.

He ran the plantation as a military command, with military discipline, and while the slaves hated him, they dared not disobey him. To add some spice to what might have become tedious, he took to baiting the strongest and angriest of the hands, to try to provoke them to run away, or to rebel against him. He respected strong niggers for their strength, while he despised them for the color of their skin. Keeping weaklings and women in line was no challenge to him; testing himself against strong men was the true measure of his masculinity.

Still, he missed his family, and when John Coffee contacted him with a possible job closer to home, he took the first opportunity he could to call on his old brigadier. He came with Coffee to Cap'n Jack's wedding at The Forks of

Cypress, and was appalled by what he saw. He believed what his parents had taught him, that the blacks were an inferior race of animals, who had been put on earth by God to serve the whites. He had no patience toward those Massas who were lenient with their slaves, and would cheerfully have murdered an abolitionist if he ever met one. The fact that James was treating niggers benevolently was abhorrent to him, and he agreed with Coffee that James needed some spine. He saw it as his good Christian duty to bring order to the chaos that was The Forks of Cypress.

He employed an assistant, his brother Albert, who shared his views on slavery, and the two of them instituted a rigorous discipline at The Forks.

The lash was used as and when Harris or his brother saw fit, which was often, troublesome slaves were chained up at night, and slave catchers roamed the boundaries with guns and bloodhounds.

James protested at Harris's severity and the cost of the man-

power, but Harris assured him he needed six months to bring the niggers to heel, and then his iron grip would relax. James, distracted by political affairs, agreed.

Yet Harris was clever. He understood James's passion for his blooded horses, and that the men who ran the stables were handpicked. He put a slave catcher near them, just in case of trouble, but otherwise he left them alone. He was a keen gambling man himself, and actually admired those stable slaves, such as Monkey Simon, or Micah and Ephraim, who knew their job and were content with the world of horses. The field hands were Harris's prime concern, and while he resented the ascendancy of the house niggers, he left them, for the most part, alone.

Except for Annie.

Black women, nigra women, had a powerful effect on Egbert Harris. He fantasized about them, and in his erotic dreams saw himself as a prize stallion subduing bucking black mares. He hated them for the sexual hold they had over him, but he could hardly restrain himself from taking them, by force preferably,

for rape proved him to be the ultimate victor.

He controlled his urges most of the time, and most of the women did not interest him-the old, or the fat, or the young girls-but Annie was none of these things. Annie was a challenge. Annie, beautiful and with a full, rounded body, became the object of Harris's most urgent desires. It didn't matter to him that she was the mother of a young child; it didn't matter to him that she was married; he wanted her, and hated her for making him want her.

Annie was completely aware of Harris's sexual interest in her, for she had seen it too often, in too many other men, and was just as aware of his hostility to her. Harris ffightened Annie. She doubted he would attempt anything because of her marriage to Cap'n Jack, but she did not trust him, and made some special chants to protect her house and her family from him.

Her greatest concern was not for herself, or even for her husband, because he lay under the wing of the Massa's protection, but for her baby, Easter.

Easter was gorgeous, a chubby, happy infant with a constant, gurgling laugh. Everyone loved her, but, apart from her parents, none more so than Jass.

The toddler Jass lived in an odd world. He was adored by his family, and Tiara, his mammy, but he was the second son, and A.J. had pride of place in everyone's affections. His mother tried to spend as much time with Jass as she could, but she was a busy woman, with a household to run and a family to raise. His father was usually closeted in his study and Jass seldom saw him. So Jass, who had the run of the plantation, attached himself to Cap'n Jack, and, through him, Easter.

Jass loved the baby Easter. When she was very little, Annie would put her outside on a blanket and Jass would sit near her; playing in the dirt and burbling to Easter as if she understood every word he said, when few people yet

understood him. As they grew, he would point things out to her, or brush flies from her, and give her pieces of his apple, which Easter was too young to eat. Sometimes Tiara would put him down for his nap in the same cot as Easter, and then Jass snuggled up to the baby girl, and told her he loved her more than anything. If he was taken away from her to go back to the big house, he would cry his distress, and sometimes threw a temper tantrum. Since he seemed so happy with the girl, they left him with her often, or with Cap'n Jack, who would walk with Jass around the garden, and play with him, as fathers play with sons. It was Cap'n Jack who spanked him if he was naughty, and Cap'n Jack who gave candies when he was good.

Jass knew that Easter was Cap'n Jack's little girl, and because he regarded Cap'n Jack as some sort of uncle, or even as a father, Easter became his sister.

In the ugly months of Harris's rule, Jass and Easter seemed to be the only ones who were oblivious to the general despondency.

Annie saw Harris watching them sometimes, and watching Easter when Jass was not there, and worried for her daughter. She knew, they all did, of children sold away from their slave mothers, and she distrusted Harris so violently she thought him capable of anything.

But Harris was not looking at Easter, or Jass. He was looking at Annie.

She was weaving at the loom one day, and was sure she saw someone outside.

She went to the window, and then to the door, but could find no one.

It happened again, a few days later, and when she went to the door, she saw Harris loitering under one of the oaks, with an ugly smile on his face.

She saw him again when she went to bathe in the creek. It was fall, and soon the water would be too cold to swim. She stripped herself naked and dove into the clean, fresh, icy water, and swam for a while, but then she heard a movement

in the bushes, and saw Harris standing on the bank, watching her.

She didn't tell Cap'n Jack because there was nothing he could do. If he lost his temper, which he might, and accosted Harris, which he might, or complained to Massa, which he might, things could very well get worse.

She avoided Harris as much as she could, and kept Easter inside the house with her, and Jass when he was with them.

She heard an odd noise one day, a small rattle on the windowpane. She thought it must be the wind, or a bird, or something fallen on the roof, and ignored it. She heard the rattle again, louder now, and realized that someone was throwing small stones at the window, as if to attract her attention.

She went to the door and when she looked out she saw Harris standing underneath the trees, some distance away, staring at her. He was rubbing his hand over his groin.

She slammed the door and ran to her baby, and held her fast, and dared not let her mind think of what Harris was doing outside.

It happened again. She tried to ignore the tiny volley of pebbles, but crept to the window. Harris was there, under the tree where he always stood, so that no one from the slave quarters could see him. He had pushed down the front of his trousers, and was caressing his naked self, in her full view.

Annie felt a fear she had not known since she came to The Forks. She stared in horror at Harris, almost unable to move. At the moment of his self-induced climax, she turned away, and wept. She was terrified by what he might do the next time the urge came upon him.

She told Cap'n Jack that night, late at night, because she couldn't sleep, and he knew something was wrong. She wept her distress, and her fear. He was not to do anything rash, she insisted, and certainly not tell the Massa.

Cap'n Jack held her until her crying was done, and told her

he would think of something. Eventually Annie, exhausted, fell asleep.

But Cap'n Jack did not sleep. He lay awake for much of the night, churning with rage at what Annie had told him. He felt as if his wife had been raped.

His first instinct was to attack Harris, but he knew that was stupid. He would be beaten for it, and nothing would be solved. He then thought of telling James, but doubted he would be believed. James would ask Harris, and he would deny it, and things would go on as before. He cursed his slavery, and cursed himself for being black, and dreamed of what he might do if he were free. Toward dawn he realized what he could do. It was so simple, he was surprised he had not thought of it before. He had to get Annie and Easter away from here, and to do that he, and they, had to be free. He would ask James to fulfill the promise he had made all those years ago.

He would ask for his freedom.

Surely James must grant it. Cap'n Jack had worked hard and loyally for so long, and what could the Massa want from him? He would bide his time, and wait until James seemed to be in a good mood, which wasn't often these days, and ask for his freedom. He would take Annie and Easter away, to the North, and find a good job, and build a little home for them, and they would be happy.

He fell asleep in contentment, and woke an hour later to the sound of the morning call.

Harris, meanwhile, had come to another conclusion. Loathing the power that Annie had over him, detesting his weak body for its fascination with her, appalled that he had exposed his need for her, in daylight, in public, he knew there was only one way to save himself from a violent action toward Annie that might get him into trouble.

He had to be rid of her.

21

As it transpired, Cap’n Jack’s timing could not possibly have been worse.

In the November elections, Andrew had won a slight majority of the popular vote, but not enough to give him victory in the electoral college. According to the Constitution, the matter would now be decided in the House of Representatives, state by state. The three contenders were Andrew, John Quincy Adams, and William Crawford, secretary of the treasury.

The kingmaker would be Henry Clay, who had also run for president but was not one of the final three. Clay’s votes, and his influence on the states, would dramatically affect the outcome.

James was astonished that Andrew had not won. The people loved him, and his supporters had been the most strident and demonstrative. That he had not been swept into office was proof to James that many doubted Andrew’s suitability. He knew he was staring at the weightiest decision of his life. James still expected that Andrew would win, but did not know if he would continue to support him. In the weeks before Christmas he had received several important visitors who shared his doubts, not the least being Henry Clay himself, who was on his way home to Kentucky.

The two men knew each other of old, for Henry had been a sometime visitor to the Hermitage in James’s Nashville days, and Henry junior, his son, was a good friend of James’s.

Henry Clay expressed his delight with The Forks of Cypress. He had heard much of it from his son, who had helped find the artisans to build it.

He listened sympathetically when James told him of his problem with his slaves, and agreed that a strong hand, and a strong overseer, were vital to the effective functioning of the system.

But he was not there to talk about slaves.

"A muddy result," he said, speaking of the election.

"Andrew?" James asked.

Henry was silent for a moment. He had bitterly opposed Andrew's actions in the Florida campaign, had denounced the hanging of the missionaries, and had been the prime mover of the illfated congressional reprimand.

"Perhaps," he said.

Quietly but eloquently, he listed his reasons for not wanting Andrew in the president's office. It was old ground, involving Andrew's personality and behavior, but Henry made it sound damning.

"These are difficult times," Henry concluded. "We need a temperate man, I say, not an uncaged lion."

"Who?" James was thrilled. He felt as if he were being included in the real election process, the other election, the secret election by powerful men who decided affairs of state behind closed doors.

Henry shrugged. "John Quincy Adams, perhaps."

Adams was the son of the second president, the successor to George Washington.

"He is from New England, and it would make those states happy not to have a Southerner for president. It has only happened once before."

Henry adopted his most honeyed voice.

" In the end, of course, " he smiled, " it all depends on you.

James laughed. “Me?”

“You and others like you,” Henry said. “For the states have the power now, which is as it should be.”

They talked for some hours about the country and its welfare and the electoral process. Again Henry spoke of his dislike for Andrew, and gently, very gently, raised the matter of the Indian treaties.

“There are even rumors of bribes paid by Andrew, and if that is true, the treaties could be annulled.”

He let it hang in the air for a moment.

“If bribery could be proven.”

James stared at the floor.

“But these are only rumors,” Henry said, changing his tone. “And but a small part of the larger portrait of Andrew.”

He had made his point clearly and effectively, without needing to stress it. Word of the bribes to the Indians had leaked out, and James was panicking. He did not know how much anyone else suspected.

Henry declined James’s hospitality for the night, as he had friends at the Nashville Inn, and left before sundown.

James did not know what to do. He knew Henry had flattered him, that his would be only one small voice in the outcome of his state’s decision regarding the presidency, but every voice counted now.

Andrew in the president’s office was dangerous, for many, many reasons, but Andrew was his friend, Andrew was responsible for much of his fortune. Just as Andrew could be responsible for his downfall. If evidence of the bribes was

found, James's part in the affair would be exposed. If the treaties could be annulled, that left much of his land ownership open to question.

He shivered in fear, and slept badly for the next few nights.

On Christmas Day, the security was reduced to allow the guards time with their families. Six slaves took advantage of this and escaped. When James heard the news, he shouted his wrath at Harris, who accepted his displeasure, but defended his position.

"Things were too easy here for too long," he said. "And it was special circumstances, being Christmas Day."

He promised the return of the slaves, and James approved the expenditure for the slave catchers. Harris left, and James sat at his desk in despair. The plantation could not function effectively if things continued like this, and that put his income at risk. The rumors of the bribes were even more distressing, for they put his holdings at risk.

He talked to Sally.

Sally was worried about the runaways, because she thought Harris had put an end to all that, but agreed the circumstances were special. Things had been better since Harris had become overseer. There had been less trouble, and, over the past month, fewer beatings and floggings.

"Perhaps that is the problem," James said bitterly.

Sally calmed him down, and tried to put his problems in

perspective for him. She guessed that the situation with Andrew was vexing him most.

"Why not let Andrew decide?" she suggested.

They had to go to Nashville in the new year, to settle A.J. at his school.

James could call on Andrew at the Hermitage, explain his doubts, and listen to Andrew's answer.

James smiled and shook his head in wonder.

"You always see things so clearly," he said. Hers was the best possible solution, because James would force Andrew to make the decision. All Andrew had to do was ask, and set James's mind at rest, and he would be given what he wanted.

Still, it troubled him to confront Andrew, and he puzzled how he would tell his friend that he had doubts about him. As the day of their departure approached his mood became more volatile again, and the absence of news about the runaway slaves kept him angry.

The slaves were caught, fifty miles away. They would be brought back to The Forks.

"Get rid of them!" James said. "I do not want them on my property. "

"A couple of 'em are good workers," Harris protested, but James cut him short.

"Sell and buy as you see fit!" He was shouting, and reminded Harris that he had said he needed only six months to bring the slaves to order. "By the time I come back from Nashville I want this plantation functioning efficiently and effectively."

"I'll need authority while you are away," Harris said, smarting at his employer's wrath.

James signed the necessary papers, and Harris left. James punched his chair in his frustration.

Sensibly, Cap'n Jack had not approached James while the slaves were missing, for he knew his Massa's temper. The news that the runaways had been caught emboldened him, and he wanted to resolve his personal dilemma before James

emboldened him, and he wanted to resolve his personal dilemma before James left for Nashville.

"What is it?" James snapped. Cap'n Jack should have known then, at that moment, that this was not the time. But his desperation to be free made him unwise, and he had con-

vinced himself that James would readily fulfill his promise.

"I want my freedom," Cap'n Jack said.

James could not believe his ears. At some other time he might have listened more sympathetically, but it was loyalty that he wanted from his slaves now, not disavowal.

"You made a promise," Cap'n Jack continued, but James cut him off.

"I said that if you served me loyally and well, I would consider it, but this is not the time."

It was incomprehensible to Cap'n Jack. It was impossible that he could have done more. The Massa had everything he could want, a fine house and plantation, a family, sons to succeed him, wealth and position. What more could he want from Cap'n Jack?

"The plantation is in uproar, the slaves rebellious," James insisted. "if ever I needed your loyalty, it is now!"

Cap'n Jack hardly heard him. His mind was awash with disappointment and bitterness.

"You breakin' yo' word," he said.

James almost hit him.

“How dare you say that to me? Remember your place, man! “

“You promised!” Cap’n Jack was desperate.

“Get out! ” James shouted. “Get out of my sight!”

Cap’n Jack looked at him dumbfounded. Tears of rage filled his eyes, but he did as he was told. He left the room, left the house, and went to Annie.

He clung to her, choking with emotion. It had all been a pipe dream. The promise had been the old lie, the white man’s lie, and he had been fool enough to believe him.

Annie held him, and stroked him, and whispered love in his ear. After a while he quieted, and sat in a chair and stared at the wall. At nothing.

James called Harris to him, in his study.

“Cap’n Jack has been insolent,” he said. “Put him in the fields for a week.” It was a euphemism they all used. Little work was done in the fields in winter, but the hands were kept busy in the barns, and fixing the outbuildings.

Harris was pleased by the turn of events. It was his chance

to break a house nigger, and it had curious implications for his obsession with Annie.

“That won’t break him,” Harris said.

“Then do what you must,” James snapped, scarcely able to control his anger.

Harris nodded and turned to leave.

“But do not sell him away,” James said quietly.

Even at this pitch of rage, he remembered all Cap'n Jack had done for him, and his affection for the man, and had to believe he would keep his promise to Cap'n Jack, one day. He was a man of his word.

James and Sally, with A.J. and Sassy, left the following morning for Nashville. They did not take the older girls, for it would make the carriage crowded, and they did not take Jass. He had a slight chill, and Sally worried that the long journey and the cold weather would not suit the boy.

James, after a night's sleep, was feeling less hostile to Cap'n Jack, but he could not countermand his order to Harris without looking weak.

"He is a good man," he said to Harris, "and has served me well. Do not be too hard on him. A few days in the fields, perhaps. "

Harris nodded. He had his orders. He had acted on them the night before. He and his brother Albert had gone to the weaving house, put manacles on Cap'n Jack, and taken him to the shed. They left him there, chained to a post, for the night.

Before they left the weaving house, Harris stared at Annie, who was clutching Easter. He said nothing to her-the stare was enough-and then they took Cap'n Jack away.

Annie stayed where she was, holding Easter, incapable of speech or movement. She tried to remember her curse, but could not, because she was too frightened of what the night might bring. It might bring Harris. She lay awake in fear all night, and when he did not come to her, she was even more scared, for she knew it boded evil.

"Just a few days in the fields," James said to Harris again, before he got into the carriage.

Harris nodded again.

James settled in the carriage. Ephraim, who was driving, flicked the reins and they clattered away.

James sat in the carriage staring out at the empty cotton fields. He was dreading Nashville. He wasn't sure how he was going to tell Andrew, who was dearer than a father to him, that he didn't love him anymore.

22

The runaways came back the following day, chained together, and already beaten bloody by the slave catchers. One had been given a rough crutch, because he was almost unable to walk. His leg had been badly tom by the hounds.

They stumbled into the clearing and fell to their knees. Harris made them stand up, and left them there, while he and his brother assembled the other slaves.

Harris went to the shed and unchained Cap'n Jack, but left his manacles on. He threw a bucket of water over him to reduce the smell of his mess, and dragged him outside with the others. He chained Cap'n Jack to a tree.

All the field hands were assembled in the clearing, staring at the runaways, trying not to imagine what might happen to any of them next.

Harris separated the two he intended to keep and ordered his brother to give them twenty lashes apiece. He would not flog the ones he intended to sell, and was furious with the catchers for marking them. Slaves who were thought to be troublemakers did not fetch the best price.

The floggings began, and those who watched wept for their brothers, but did not cry out as loudly as those being punished. Their screams reached the house, and the slaves there, and from the stables, crept out to see, but kept their distance.

Both men being flogged fainted, and water was thrown over them. When it

was done they were dragged away to the shed, and chained up, and a woman sent to rub salt into their wounds, to stop the bleeding.

Everyone waited.

It was a cold day, and the runaways were shivering. Harris simply walked along the line, inspecting them, and trying to evaluate what the catchers'

beatings had cost him.

They waited for an hour, and then the auctioneer arrived in his cart with his men. There was no official slave market in Florence, but an enterprising retired overseer had set up a lucrative business, providing and disposing of slaves, as an agent for the larger cities.

Fear danced through Cap'n Jack's heart and mind. He could not believe the Massa would let him be sold.

"These four?" the auctioneer asked, and Harris nodded.

"And him," he said, pointing to Willis, whose brother Henry had run away the previous year, and had never been found.

"I ain't done nuttin'!" Willis cried, and clung to his woman.

"You're a troublemaker like your brother," Harris said. The men dragged Willis away from his screaming wife. Willis fought and punched, but they knocked him senseless and put him in the cart with the runaways.

Harris watched impassively, and then turned and stared at Cap'n Jack.

"And him," he said, pointing to a young, rough giant, Abel, who knew no one at The Forks and went quietly. He didn't care where he went, or whom he served; slavery was slavery, no matter who the Massa was, and one day he

would be free.

Harris did not take his eyes off Cap'n Jack. Despite the cold, Cap'n Jack was sweating, shivering, praying that his knees would not give way.

"Fetch the woman," Harris said softly to Albert, who nodded at two catchers, and they went to the weaving house.

Slowly it dawned on Cap'n Jack, and a rage greater than any rage he had ever known filled him, and a fear, and an overwhelming despair.

"No!" he cried, from the pit of his soul.

Harris stared at him.

To Harris it was simple. James had said he had failed at his job, and Harris agreed. He had not brought order in six months, and since he could not blame himself and his methods, he had to find a scapegoat.

Annie.

If Annie had such a powerful effect on him, a righteous white man, what effect did she have on the licentious blacks? She was a whore, like all nigra women, who had bewitched him. So she must be a troublemaker, causing dissension among the hands, causing them to fight each other for possession of her, just as he would have fought any man to take her as his own. Women were the root of all evil, foul temptresses, wanton harlots, and he could not maintain order and discipline as long as she was at The Forks. So he would tell the Massa.

In any case, it would be too late when James returned. She would be gone, gone with her strumpet, lascivious ways, gone from his mind, gone from his flesh, gone from his lust, forever.

They bought Annie from the weaving house. She held Easter in her arms, and

was not struggling because she did not know what was going to happen to her. Even if she had known, she might not have struggled. She had never struggled against her fate before, and she had never believed that her happiness with Cap'n Jack would last.

Cap'n Jack saw her and began shouting at her, telling her to run, to get away, begging someone, anyone, for help. He pulled at his chains, but they held fast to the tree. He used all his strength to jerk on them, to break them, to get free, like a crazed puppet unable to be rid of his confining strings.

Women were crying now, not because they loved Annie, but because it might happen to any of them.

Annie accepted what they did to her, because there was nothing she could do. Tears were streaming down her face. Although she had known her happiness could not last, she couldn't bear that it was going to end, it had been so sweet to her, and she called out a curse on the world.

She struggled when they took Easter from her, but a man held the child while they put the chains on Annie, and then gave her back. They pushed Annie to the cart, and one of the runaways leaned down to help her up, because of Easter.

"No," Harris said. "Not the brat."

His cruelty was breathtaking to them. He could not separate the child from her mother, surely not.

"The brat has done nothing," Harris said. "The brat stays here. "

Time seemed to stop for a moment, and there was an eon of silence. Then out of the silence came a sound that none of the slaves watching wanted to hear again in their lifetime.

Annie screamed.

She screamed and fought and kicked and bit and screamed and begged and punched, and screamed again, the primal cry of a mother's pain.

Cap'n Jack screamed with her, and their cries melded in the winter air, in a duet of agony, and those watching tried to block out the sound, for it came from hell.

The auctioneer had no time to waste and was merciful. Unable to get the frantic, demented woman into the cart, he hit her on the head with the butt of his gun, and she fell to the ground senseless. They snatched Easter from her, and a woman ran to take the child, to hold her and shield her from the awful vision of her mother's going.

Cap'n Jack fell to his knees, weeping and scrabbling through the dirt, trying to get to his love.

They bundled Annie into the cart, and she lay on the floor of it, unconscious. Harris signed the papers for the auctioneer, and the cart rumbled away.

Cap'n Jack could hardly see through his tears, but climbed to his feet trying to catch one last glimpse of Annie. All he saw was a slave cart rumbling down the hill, and all he heard was anguish.

Harris waited till the slave cart was gone, and then made a speech. He told them he had been lenient with them. He had eased up on the discipline and punishments, and he had been repaid with ingratitude. Today was just an example of what he would do if any more slaves attempted to run away, or if any more of them caused trouble. He would forcibly separate husbands from wives, mothers from sons, daughters from fathers, just as he had done this day.

He kept them standing in the cold for the rest of the afternoon, and would not let them go back to their quarters. Easter was crying, but she was only the loudest, for ail the women and many of the men were in tears of grief and discomfort.

Toward sunset he let them go.

"What about him?" Albert asked.

Cap'n Jack had fallen to the ground and lay there, motionless.

“Let him go,” Harris said. The slave cart was well away by now. “See if he can shut the brat up.”

Easter was still crying, although the woman who had been holding her was trying to feed her some porridge.

Harris walked away. Albert unlocked Cap’n Jack’s chains, and left him lying on the ground.

Slowly, sensibility n,,turned to Cap’n Jack, and rage. He lay still for a moment, letting his anger boil, until it must, perforce, explode.

He scrambled to his feet and ran screaming at Harris. Albert cried a warning, and Harris turned as Cap’n Jack fell on him, punching him, kicking him, but no match for the overseer, who jabbed hard, viciously hard, in Cap’n Jack’s stomach.

It winded Cap’n Jack, and gave Harris the advantage. He grabbed the slave, and called for Alfred. They dragged him back to his tree, chained him again, and Harris lashed him without mercy.

Not even the physical pain of the lash could match the agony in Cap’n Jack’s heart, and he screamed and cried and begged God for mercy, not because of the whip, but because of what he had lost.

23

James approached the Hermitage unwillingly. He had always loved coming to this place before, but now he was filled with foreboding and guilt. He hoped he would not see Rachel,

He had avoided coming here for three days, and found some consolation in the company of Eleanor, in whose house they were staying, and Sara, who came to visit. He had not told them of his conflicting emotions toward Andrew, of his divided loyalties, nor had they asked. They greeted him warmly, and Sally and the children, and,gossiped about their lives as if James had never been away.

Eleanor was in high dudgeon, because Richard Coll, who

had been Andrew's aide in Florida, was paying attention to her daughter, James's niece Mary. Eleanor had no time for Coll.

"A brigand," she sniffed. "Like that eccentric Houston boy, or any of those who follow Andrew so blindly. Pirates, the lot of them."

James smiled wryly at Sally.

"They're not so bad, Eleanor," he said, "just young men sowing their oats."

"Mr. Coll's oats will not be sown near my daughter," Eleanor snapped, wagging her finger at James to emphasize her point. "You do not know what it's like, Jamie; you do not live here anymore."

According to Eleanor, Nashville had become impossible. Andrew had collected an army of supporters around him in his bid for the presidency, mostly young men or army veterans, and they were riding, rampant and roughshod over the town.

"Getting drunk at all hours of the day, picking fights with innocent bystanders because they did not vote for Andrew, and doing in broad daylight things that decent folk do only in the darkness, in the privacy of their own homes."

She was working herself into a considerable state.

"And Mr. Coll is one of the worst of them," she said, her voice quivering with indignation. "But will Andrew call them into line? No. He only laughs and encourages them to greater excess."

She rounded on James.

“Heaven help us if he does become president,” she said, as if it were all James’s fault. “For I have seen his govemment. “

Sally tried to hide her giggles, and James got cross with her, but gently, for he saw the funny side of it.

They took A.J. to his new school, and were satisfied by it. Sally thought it was too spartan, but A.J. told her not to be silly, he could look after himself, and asked his father if Ephraim could stay as his personal slave. James didn’t want to lose Ephraim from the stables at The Forks, but promised to find someone for his son.

They went to visit Colonel Elliot, and checked on the prog-

ress of the blooded horses. James was satisfied that all was in order, and pleased with the colonel’s work.

Then he had no more excuses. Sally offered to come with him, but he declined. He had to do this on his own, whatever it was he was going to do.

He rode to the Hermitage and sat on his horse for a while when he got there, enjoying the view and admiring the new house that Andrew had built. It was much simpler than The Forks, but suited its garden setting to perfection. He dismounted, and walked in, leading his mount. A slave came running to take the horse.

James looked around, and saw Rachel. He was shocked.

She was sitting in the garden, with Alfred, wrapped up in blankets and reading from her Bible. She had lost a lot of weight, and was pale and looked ill, and her hair was quite gray.

Alfred saw James, and whispered to Rachel. She looked up from her Bible, and did not seem to recognize him for a moment, but then a golden smile

suffused her face, and she tried to stand, to greet him.

She stumbled against her chair, and Alfred reached out to steady her.

James walked quickly to them, and kissed Rachel and bade her sit, which she did gladly.

She was so pleased to see him. She smiled and laughed, and held his hands. She begged him to forgive her appearance; she had been in bed most of the winter, but was feeling better now, and was taking advantage of the lovely day to get some fresh air.

She asked after Sally, and the children, and expressed her sorrow that she had never met Jass.

James talked about his own sons for a moment, and asked after hers, and her eyes regained something of their old sparkle. She listed their various achievements at school, but talked mostly of Andrew junior, who was her darling.

There was a little silence.

“And Andrew?” James asked.

Rachel turned the pages of her Bible.

“It’s such a pity you had to move away,” she said. “He misses you, most dreadfully.”

James gave a small laugh.

“He has so many friends,” he said.

“No,” Rachel said. “He has so many sycophants, and careless, thoughtless young men, who like him only because his glory reflects on them.”

She checked herself, as if she had said more than she intended. She fought to find a smile, but when she looked at James, her eyes were dull.

” He wi 11 be so pleased to see you, ” she said. ” He is relying on your support.”

James looked away. She will love him to her grave, he thought, and beyond.

He talked about silly things with her until she was tired and had to go inside. Alfred went in with them. Rachel went to her room, and Alfred took James to the dining room.

It was full of men, many of them young, lounging around, drinking and smoking, chewing tobacco. Andrew sat at the head of the table, which was piled with papers, surrounded by advisers, all telling him what he needed to do to win the presidency.

But Andrew was hardly listening to the older men. He laughed and joked with the younger, and told ribald stories with them, and cursed and drank.

He finds his youth in them, James thought. Or they are an army of his sons.

Alfred moved to his Massa, and whispered in his ear. Andrew looked up and saw James, and he roared a welcome.

“Well, James,” he said. “They are trying to steal this election from me, but I will best them yet!”

It was as much for the benefit of the young men as for James. They cheered their agreement.

“You have come to be one of our army? You have come to offer your influence on my behalf?” Andrew said, but not as if it was a question.

“I came to talk to you,” James said quietly.

Perhaps no one else in the room heard him, but Andrew did. The soft sapphire eyes hardened to blue diamond. He stood up and walked out of the room,

beckoning James to follow.

They went to Andrew's study. Andrew sat at his desk, and

nodded to a chair for James, who preferred to remain standing. "My enemies are determined to stop me," he said in a voice of quiet, rolling thunder.

"By lies and corruption, and vicious slanders of supposed past scandals."

The question of Andrew and Rachel's possibly bigamous marriage had been raised during the campaign.

"But I will use their own tricks against them, and, by the eternal, I will be president!"

The thunder broke, and Andrew was roaring.

"I will do whatever is necessary, by fair means or foul, but I will be president!"

Something about James's manner was disturbing him.

"And I am relying on all my friends to help," he said, more softly. "To argue my case, to put my cause-"

He laughed.

—to line a few pockets, if necessary. Eh?"

"I couldn't do that," James said. There had been enough bribery already, and he had done too much of it.

Andrew studied him carefully.

"But you will vote for me, in the Alabama senate?"

It was now. This was the moment.

“I want you to tell me why I should,” James said, diffidently.

Some spittle was dribbling from Andrew’s mouth. It always did, when he was vexed. He considered James’s question, and then gave his response.

“Because I made you what you are,” he said.

The room reverberated with his anger, and James could feel it crushing him. He must give in to it, or break away from it forever. Then Andrew’s words thrust a memory of his last argument with his father into his mind.

“You will never amount to anything.”

“I made you what you are.”

It was the same thing said differently. They were the same men, powerful, arrogant men, who would not allow their children to cross them. It gave James extraordinary strength. He had walked away from his father once and made something of his life. He could do it again now, and he would survive again.

“Nobody made me,” James said, furiously. “I made myself. “

He walked to the door. Andrew didn’t try to stop him, just as his father had not tried to stop him all those years ago.

“I will be president,” Andrew shouted. But James knew he was not shouting at him, only at himself.

When James got back to Eleanor’s he told Sally that he had broken with Andrew, and was shifting his support to Henry Clay. Henry gave all his votes to John Quincy Adams, who became the new president.

But Andrew kept his word. Four years later he was elected by an

overwhelming popular vote. Just before he left the Hermitage for his inaugural, Rachel, worn out by the world, slipped quietly away to. meet her maker.

24

Cap’n Jack struggled to waken. His eyelids were heavy and his brain was numb, and he was sure he had been drugged. He knew other people were with him. He tried to focus and saw Parson Dick, and Tiara.

Then he remembered his pain, and closed his eyes again.

After his whipping, field hands had carried him to the weaving house, and took Easter to Angel. Tiara came with some of the women, and rubbed salt into the cut flesh on his back to stop the bleeding. They used herbs from the old days on his wounds, to try to stop scars from forming, and gave him laudanum to ease the pain and help him sleep.

The opium kept him unconscious for half a day, and when he stirred they gave him more, and he slept again. He drifted between sleep and waking for two days after that, and there was always somebody with him, to try to soften his memory when he woke.

Angel brought his daughter to him sometimes, so she would not forget her pappy, and Parson Dick came with beef tea for him to drink, so that he might regain his strength.

He lay on his stomach, because of the livid, bloody, oozing welts on his back, and sometimes he knew his friends were there, and sometimes he did not.

He opened his eyes again, because he wanted to wake, and begin exacting

whatever vengeance he could on those who had so cruelly wronged him.

“Annie?” he whispered.

Parson Dick shook his head.

“She gone,” he said.

Cap’n Jack didn’t respond. He knew Annie was gone because he remembered every detail of her going. It was branded on his mind, and he would never forget. He asked because he hoped that maybe somehow she had come back.

“Massa find her when he come back,” Tiara said, but Cap’n Jack didn’t believe her, and perhaps she didn’t even believe herself. She sprinkled some more herbs and salt on his back, and Cap’n Jack winced at the sting of it.

“Easter?” he said.

“She doin’ jus’ fine,” Tiara assured him. “Angel lookin’ after her. -

Cap’n Jack nodded, and closed his eyes.

Tiara whispered a few words to Parson Dick. She had to get back to the house, to tend to the Jackson children. Parson Dick nodded that he would stay for a while, and Tiara left.

Parson Dick sat waiting patiently until Cap’n Jack opened his eyes again.

“The pain bad?” Parson Dick asked him, and Cap’n Jack nodded.

“Want some more laudanum?”

Cap’n Jack shrugged. Parson Dick took a little bottle from his pocket, and made Cap’n Jack swallow some of the clear liquid. He had stolen it from Sally’s locked medicine chest. Locks were no barrier to Parson Dick.

“Not too much, you had plenty,” he said.

He was immaculately clad, as always, in black velvet and a brocade vest.

He looked incongruous sitting in this smoky room, in the candlelight, beside

the bloodied slave.

“Don’t ever forgive them for what they did,” he said. “Not ever. “

Cap’n Jack would never forgive.

“And one day you will have your vengeance.”

Cap’n Jack almost smiled. It was as if Parson Dick were reading his mind.

But he smiled too, at the cultured, English tones of the butler. His accent and clothes were at war with his sentiments.

Parson Dick took a small wooden carving from his pocket.

“Keep this with you always,” he whispered fiercely. “It has power. It is from the old country.”

Cap’n Jack, who had closed his eyes, opened them and looked at Parson Dick, who saw the question.

“Africa,” he said, and started to chant, in a language Cap’n Jack didn’t know.

“Africa. 0, Africa. Why did you let us go? Were we not your children? Why did you let them snatch us from you? We were your children, Africa, why did you let us go? We were the beginning, Africa, we were the start of man. Our kingdoms were mighty and our people brave, but you let us go.

“You let them drag us from you, and bring us, like the children of Israel, to bondage in a new Egypt, and we suffer, as the children of Israel suffered, but we have not forgotten you, Africa, and we will come back to you, Africa, if only in our dreams. I am Africa.

“May your spirits guard us, Africa, and destroy our enemies. Protect your children, 0 Africa, and make them strong, so that they may suffer their bondage,

and live, as the children of Israel lived, and fly from it when it is done. Always, I am Africa. “

Cap’n Jack understood only the one word, Africa, but that word, and the curious chant, coming from this curious man, educated, literate, and completely secretive about his background, struck a responsive chord in Cap’n Jack. He did not remember Africa, although it had meaning for him, just as Ireland had meaning for James’s children.

He staredat the wooden carving, and it gave him strength. He drifted to sleep again, and it was a good sleep, a deep sleep, because although he was shattered by loneliness, he knew he was not alone.

Parson Dick put the carving on a shelf, and tiptoed out into the evening, to serve the Massa’s family.

Cap’n Jack woke up a little later, because someone was prodding his arm.

He tried to shake the sleep and the drug from his eyes, and saw a small, worried face, inches from his, staring at him, and asking what was wrong.

It was Jass.

Jass was bored. He’d been kept in bed for two days because he was sick, and his mamma and papa were away. He hadn’t seen Cap’n Jack or Annie or Easter for ages, and he missed them. He ate the dinner that Tiara gave him, and then toddled on his own, as he had often done, out of the kitchen, and made his way to his friends.

He came into the weaving house, and he couldn’t find Annie or Easter, but he saw Cap’n Jack lying on the bed, and his back was all covered in blood, He got scared, because somebody must have hurt his friend, who wouldn’t wake up. He’d seen them do it to some of the other black people, and they’d screamed so loudly he got scared and ran away.

When Cap’n Jack opened his eyes, Jass was so relieved that he started to cry.

Cap’n Jack put his arm around the boy, and held him close, told him not to cry, everything would be all right.

“Have you been bad?” Jass asked.

“No,” Cap’n Jack assured him.

“Then why did they hurt you, and make you bleed?”

Cap’n Jack struggled for words to explain the unexplainable, but couldn’t find them. He tried to sit up, but he gasped at the pain of it, and Jass started crying again.

Cap’n Jack tried to hush him, and even hummed a little lullaby, and stowly Jass calmed down, and snuggled into his friend’s arm.

Having calmed the boy, he tried to find a way to calm himself. He saw the African carving sitting on the shelf.

“You love me?” he asked Jass.

Jass assured him that he did.

“You ain’t gwine ever hurt me, not in all yo’ days?”

Jass said not.

“Promise? ‘

Jass nodded his head.

Cap’n Jack picked him up under his arms, and held the toddler up to the carving.

“Say promise,” he told Jass.

Jass did.

Cap’n Jack wasn’t quite sure what he was doing, but he had to find some way to ease his aching heart, and this odd ceremony, before a pagan god, had some meaning for him, for in it was an unbreakable vow.

“Promise you ain’t gwine ever do what yo’ pappy done?”

Jass didn’t know what his pappy had done, but promised anyway. He would promise Cap’n Jack anything.

“Promise you ain’t gwine ever be yo’ father’s son?” Jass laughed.

“Promise,” Cap’n Jack said sharply.

So Jass promised that he would never be his father’s son, and Cap’n Jack was satisfied. In some small, unexplainable way, his revenge had begun.

He heard the shouts in the distance, Tiara and Angel, Parson Dick and some others, all running through the night, calling for Jass. They thought him lost.

Cap’n Jack struggled from his bed, his back screaming in pain, and carried Jass to the door.

He called to Tiara.

“The chile,” he said, “is found.”

PART TWO

MERGING

The weariness of’wholly.f6rgotten nations I cannot castfirom mly eyelids.

Nor keepfi-om my.frightened soul The silentfalling of’distant stars.

—HUGO VON HOFMANNSTAHL

25

“Nigger lover,” they chanted, just as always. “Nigger lover! Nigger lover!

Nigger lover!”

Jass stood there, fists up, waiting for the blow. He never threw the first punch because he had not picked the fight, but waited, heart racing, for what he knew would happen.

When it came, it hurt, just as always. Wesley, his opponent, was only a year older, but that year represented to Jass a seeming ton weight of muscle, and he sprawled back against some of his school friends. The slaves, watching impassively in a group near the fence, sighed a collective regret, for they had been hoping for another outcome they knew to be unlikely. Just as always.

Jass was not unpopular at school; many of the boys liked him, some were his friends, and all respected his father’s position, but they all enjoyed a fight, and the high ethics of boxing demanded not just a victim but also a valid cause. Jass had a good and supple physique for his age and was always prepared, however unwillingly, to defend himself with his fists, so picking on him could never be called bullying. Wesley would start discussing the economics of the Southern states, Jass would suggest ideas of diversification away from slavebased

agriculture, and before long the others would be calling him an abolitionist and a nigger lover, and the fight would begin.

It was sport as much as anything, but it also confirmed Wesley's physical preeminence and reinforced certain concepts that most of them preferred not to question. These beliefs were reflected in the education given at the Reverend Sloss Preparatory Academy for Young Gentlemen, outside Florence. The North, their teachers told them, was another country, however nominally part of the United States, whence the flowing 197

tide of abolition might one day swamp the triumphant sand castle of the South.

The South, they were taught, was a unique, essentially pastoral, society of unlimited potential, whose survival depended on an endless supply of cheap labor. It didn't matter how closely the governance of the South was linked to that of the North, or how passionately devoted a few of their teachers might be to the federal cause. It didn't matter that the present president, Andrew Jackson, now into his second term, was one of their own, a slaveholder dedicated to limiting federal power over the sovereignty of the states. It didn't matter that the president frequently insisted that the Union must be preserved, because the very fact that he said it only confirmed what most of them already believed: The Union was under considerable strain, with states' rights as the separating issue, and slavery as the separating fact.

Only recently, South Carolina had come to the very brink of civil war. The industrial North had successfully demanded high tariffs on imported manufactured goods, cloth and clothing, to protect its own industries.

South Carolina claimed this was destroying the slavebased cotton economy, and had threatened to nullify the tariffs. Secession had only been averted by the adroit actions of the great president.

In Southampton County, Virginia, an insurrection had occurred, led by Nat Turner, a black preacher, in which fiftyseven whites, including several women

and children, were killed. It brought back vivid memories of the rebellious plot by the free black, Denmark Vesey, ten years earlier, and was the Southern nightmare come to bloody life. A sensational manhunt followed. Over a hundred of Turner's followers were slaughtered, and the ringleader himself was caught, tried, and executed, along with twenty of his henchmen. But at the subsequent Virginia Convention, several proposals for the emancipation of slaves were only narrowly defeated, and the recent foundation of the American Anti-Slavery Society only added to the fortress mentality of the South.

Jass was no revolutionary thinker; he had no great moral argument against slavery. He had been brought up with it, had lived with it all his life, and every element of his education, except one, contributed to his belief in its present necessity.

The exception to Jass's otherwise conventional upbringing as a young Southern gentleman was his considerable friendship with Cap'n Jack. Such friendships were not, in themselves, unusual. All white boys of his class had black nurses, several had been suckled by slave women when their own mother's milk went dry, and they had all grown up with varying degrees of contact between themselves and the black populations of their plantations, farms, or houses. A reasonably energetic white boy, growing up secure in his authority, might have a range of friendships that covered the complete social strata-until he crossed the limiting threshold of puberty.

A boy can go where a man cannot, and at puberty, several unseen doors were closed to him. He had been raised to the concept of the sanctity of white women, and now his education began to include, by subtle inference rather than outright lecture, the baseness of carnal desire, and the profound evils of miscegenation.

They all had some knowledge of procreation-they saw it in the rutting animals on their farms-and now they were taught the sinfulness of giving way to these base desires, with women of any class or station but most especially with black women, since the resulting offspring would eventually defile and dilute the sacred white blood.

What puzzled Jass was that Wesley's conscience never seemed to bother him. He swore he had had intercourse with a slave girt, but no visitation was ever made upon him by a wrathful God, nor on any of the others who claimed to have followed his braggart path.

Jass regarded such talk as foul, but his blood ran hot when Wesley first announced his ability to bring himself to private climax. Jass felt that powerful urge, but tried to resist it. It was wrong, they were taught, it was sinful, it was a sign of weakness of personality and sickness of the mind, and led to physical deformity. If their need got too desperate, Mother Nature herself would provide any necessary release in sweet, nocturnal dreams, to which Wesley snickered that sometimes Nature needed a helping hand. But the prohibition only intensified the desire, and occasionally Jass had succumbed, to be racked with guilt afterward. He longed to confide his confusion to someone, but since the death of his brother A.J., whose

neck had been broken in a riding accident at Princeton two years earlier, Jass's only confidants were his classmates, his cousins, whose knowledge was as limited as his own, and Cap'n Jack.

Jass had grown up in the carefree country of reduced expectation that is the province of second sons. A.J., heir to the family estate, had given him scraps of guidance on matters of the world, but now he was gone, and Jass sorely missed him. His cheerful younger brothers, William, Alexander, and George, an inseparable trio, were at school in Nashville, and even when they came home to The Forks, Jass found it difficult to break into their tight-knit group. Three of his older sisters, Mary, Martha, and Mary Ellen, were married. Sassy was still at home, but was more interested in potential husbands than familiar brothers, and baby Jane, whom Jass adored, was a sickly child, and no companion to a teenage boy.

So Jass's most constant company had been the slaves, with Cap'n Jack as his surrogate father, and his tutors in the mysteries of life had been those same slaves, his friends at the Academy, and his stem, unyielding schoolmasters, who

seemed almost to condone the hypocrisy of what they taught. While physical contact with black women, any women, was publicly condemned, the more secular teachers also hinted that real men, unable to restrain their natural urges, should take their relief with whatever slave women were at their disposal. Jass found this half world of puberty confounding, confused by what he felt, by what he was taught, and by what he was experiencing.

Nor was his father much help to him. James liked Jass but still mourned A.J., and found it difficult to communicate with his second son. Cap'n Jack wasn't interested in Jass's adolescent problems because he had other, unrealistic, ambitions for him. Jass would now inherit The Forks, he would own property and slaves, and, determined to raise the young man to be the Massa he wanted, Cap'n Jack relentlessly, if amiably, exploited the rational side of Jass's nature by divorcing the idea of slavery from race.

Rather than protesting that the enslaving of blacks was wrong, Cap'n Jack cultivated in Jass instead the economic necessity of a move away from the reliance on la-

bor-intensive cotton, and thus slavery, until slavery itself became unnecessary. This put Jass desperately at odds with his peers.

Which is why, just as always, young Jass was defending himself, or his ideas, when actually he was well aware of the basic flaw in his own—and Cap'n Jack'sposition. Economic survival would always depend on manual labor, whether it be field hands picking cotton or weavers at the spinning jennies in the industrial North, and what did it matter if that labor was white, which was unthinkable, or black, which was the status quo?

Cap'n Jack, a dreamer, not a thinker, had no ready answer for this, and Jass found himself caught in another dilemma. He was obstinate rather than passionate. He fought hard and well, not to protect a strongly held ideal but to protect himself from too much physical injury. Wesley, having a cause to defend, was able to inflict severe superficial damage on his only slightly smaller

opponent. It was a short, sharp fight, which ended with Jass on the ground, hand to his bleeding nose, while Wesley towered in habitual triumph over him.

“Won’t you ever learn, Jackson?” he crowed. “That’s how it is for nigger lovers.”

He walked away to the cheers and backslapping of his gang, their slaves following them.

Cap’n Jack sighed and went to comfort his man’s wounded pride and tend his bloody nose.

“I nearly had him that time,” Jass gasped.

“Sho’ thing, Massa Jass, yo’ nearly did,” Cap’n Jack agreed with the lie.

He hauled the young man to his feet, sat him on a log, and held a cloth to the bloody nose. School friends cantered away on horses, calling greetings to Jass. No rancor was held; they had enjoyed the fight, and Jackson was always such a damned good sport about it. The reluctant worthy waved an aching arm in response, and called as cheery farewells. Then he turned away and looked at the river.

“Wesley bigger’n yo’,” Cap’n Jack said, although he knew it to be scant comfort. “He be gone in a year or two, Up South, to college.”

It didn’t help. “It doesn’t make any difference. There’ll

always be another Wesley, somewhere.” Jass stared at the river. “I’d like to beat him once. Just once, that’s all.”

He brushed aside regret and took Cap’n Jack’s arm for assistance. “Don’t tell my parents,” he ordered mildly, as they walked to the horses.

“I never do, Massa Jass,” the slave replied.

The afternoon was flawless, warm and lovely, the last of the dogwood blossoms dappling the countryside like wayward snowflakes. Although the school was on the outskirts of town and they had no need to pass through Florence on their way home, Jass always enjoyed the long detour, trotting on Morgan, his chestnut gelding, through the main street to catch a sense of its bustle and purpose. The construction of a new building or some improvement in the town's infrastructure gave him a tremendous sense of pride.

My father made this, he thought to himself. If it were not for him this would not be here.

It wasn't strictly true-he knew that his father was only a shareholder in the development company that had created the town-but it encouraged his sense of the frontier tamed, and of the enormous potential of the country. Sometimes he wondered what country he meant, for often he felt completely alien from the Northern states, could not conceive of himself as a citizen of these United States, and took refuge in the more romantic, and possibly then more truthful, America.

America seemed to him to be without borders or boundaries, except those of the mind and the great oceans, and somehow the appendage "United States" limited this. He wondered if a fellow from New York or Boston could understand the call of the enormous, empty continent that lay just at the edges of their known world, and of the adventure that unlimited horizon promised. He yearned to see the wild Mexican province of Texas, the almost uncrossable Rocky Mountains, and the distant, legendary land beyond that the Spanish called California.

Part of him, too, longed to visit the Northern cities, for however much they were disparaged as dens of Yankee liberalism, they were always spoken of with excitement. He tried to imagine Florence a hundred, two hundred, times bigger, but then he could not imagine how a world without slaves functioned in any practical sense, and itched to understand what it

was about slavery that seemed to make so many Yankees so very cross.

Torn between the desire to build or to explore, to settle as eventual master of a successful plantation or travel thousands of miles to a distant place and create his own empire as his father had done, he would spur Morgan at the edge of town and gallop home, Cap'n Jack beside him, through the lovely, fertile country.

The wind laved his aching body and bruised spirit, and the sense of the power of his horse, which he was controlling, inspired his blossoming manhood. They rode down avenues of untidy cypresses, on roads that had been created only by the traffic of horses and carts. They passed lonely farming shacks, on land only partly and recently reclaimed from nature.

He could easily imagine how it was when the true native people still lived here, smoke from their fires curling through the lazy afternoon to the distant, vaulting heavens. He could see himself in their company, as his father had been not so very many years ago, learning of their values and beliefs and endless, unwritten, recited history.

He loved those stories at his father's knee. He could listen for hours to the tales his parents told, his mother too, for they were both pioneer people who had come to this extravagant wilderness, done battle with it, and won. They had collected a vast repository of folklore that was, to the impressionable, dreaming Jass, a living thing, because his parents had lived it.

And if they were capable of doing what they had done, not so very many years ago, almost within the span of his own lifetime, then what was he capable of9 What adventures awaited him out there, just a few miles farther than his parents had gone? What stories would he be able to tell his children one day, of frontiers extended and mountains crossed and wilderness made productive? He knew that out there lay the possibility of experiences richer than all the treasure on earth, in this country called America.

They broke through the sheltering trees, and Jass slowed his pace. There it was, on a little hill, dazzling him as it always did, the pristine, elegant mansion, surrounded by cotton fields of apple-pie order on land that had been a sacred place to the native peoples. He could see the stallions grazing in a paddock

beside the immaculately maintained racecourse, and wished that Leviathan was kept here instead of in Nashville, for he was the most famous stud in America. He could see the trim acres of the cotton fields, with row upon orderly row of the budding plants that yielded such a bountiful harvest. He could hear the distant song of the weeding gang as they moved among the sprouting cotton under the careful eye of Mitchell, the overseer.

The splendid vision caught at his heart, just as always, and all sense of the roaming life deserted him. His only ambition, at this moment, was to cherish this place, to nurture it, to watch it grow and be a haven of happiness and tranquillity, as it was to hirn now.

Cap'n Jack's thoughts on staring at The Forks of Cypress were colored by other experiences, different memories. For Cap'n Jack hated this house, which represented to him all the things he despised in old Massa James, all the many promises sweetly made and bitterly broken. Even building the house on this hallowed land now seemed to him profane, and represented the precise moment from which he could date his many bitter disappointments in James Jackson, whom once he had held in such regard.

Jass knew nothing of this, and smiled at him, just as always.

"Race you," he called, and galloped away. Cap'n Jack knew the pattern of it; it happened every day. Jass would make for the house, but halfway along the drive he would spur Morgan over the fence and gallop once around the racetrack before heading home, to the amusement of Monkey Simon and the stable hands, and the ire of Murdoch, the trainer, who thought it disturbed the broodmares. Cap'n Jack kicked his horse too, and, better rider, he could easily have overtaken Jass, but held back, to let the young man win.

Jass rode hard and fast now, laughing, as if suddenly freed of care, in what seemed to be exhilaration but might as easily be a mask for the impending moment when he must face his parents, and they would know he had been fighting again.

Pocahontas Rebecca Meredith Boiling Perkins fanned herself vigorously. “A wedding!” she exclaimed. “It’s nothing but a charade! A fiasco! Just so a couple of nigras can jump the broom. Why, I feel faint even thinking about it!”

Sally smiled. Mrs. Perkins had felt faint several times that afternoon already, although the day was not overly warm. “A little more tea, Mrs.

Perkins?” she asked. The fanning worthy gave an aggrieved nod, and Polly, a slave maid, refilled her glass with cool sun tea.

“That the president’s daughter-in-law could do such a thing! “

She was in full flood now and Sally knew from experience that little could stop the flow unless something of more pressing import occurred.

Which was hardly likely, given the thunderous rarnifications of Sarah York Jackson’s correspondence, which had arrived at both the Perkins place and The Forks that day. Although it was apparently a simple invitation to a wedding, Sally was sure that matriarchs (and not a few patriarchs) throughout the South would be as agog about it as their present visitor. The mail had been delivered to the Perkins estate at midday, and when Mrs. Perkins read the letter, her first reaction was to go and lie down with a sick headache, but almost immediately her second reaction took charge, for she had to share her feelings with someone, and her daughter was not audience enough. Ordering Elizabeth to dress for visiting, she had summoned the landau, taken some care over her toilette, and arrived at The Forks in time for afternoon tea and, she hoped, some comforting apoplexy. But the wretched Jacksons hardly seemed bothered by the outrageous correspondence, and seemed to think the whole thing rather amusing.

“Well, that’s Yankees for you,” snapped Mrs. Perkins, as 205

if Yankees were the reason for the world’s ills, and took a sip of tea.

James, distracted by other letters, had taken little interest in the conversation, or monologue with interruptions as Sally thought of it. Now he looked up. “Sarah’s hardly a Yankee,” he said.

“Might as well be,” Mrs. Perkins snapped back. “Mixing nigras and white folk at a social event, can you imagine? Is that your boy?”

As it was uttered all in one breath, it took Sally a moment to realize that the tiny, hoped-for miracle had arrived. Something had happened to distract Mrs. Perkins from her obsession with the wedding. Jass was galloping across the racetrack toward the drive, Cap’n Jack only yards behind him. Sally watched him for a moment, maternally satisfied that he was home safe, and knew just by looking at him that he had been fighting again. She was also acutely aware that Mrs. Perkins was making urgent, silent eye contact with her daughter, known to them all, but not to her parents, as Lizzie, who was sitting with Sassy on the lawn, some little distance away. Sally sensed matchmaking in the air.

Although only fourteen, Lizzie completely understood her mother’s unspoken signaling from the veranda, but saw little need for it. She knew she looked pretty, she always made sure she looked her very best when visiting the Jacksons, and she knew she had little, if any, competition in the district. The potential of Jass as her eventual spouse had never been overtly discussed by her parents, but their constant hints at the suitability of such a union made their opinion clear.

Lizzie thought it was a fairly good idea, too. Old James Jackson was much richer than her own father, a reasonably successful businessman who had small interest in agriculture but had bought a plantation near Florence five years ago to give himself a sense of place, and because land was a secure investment. The day-to-day running of the farm bored him, and he had little aptitude for picking overseers who might make up for his own shortcomings, so the plantation jogged along, and the Perkinses were able to dwell comfortably in the fantasy that they were landholding gentry.

Not that they were poor-Lizzie would bring a handsome dowry to her marriage-but they were not, by any means, rich.

Lizzie was an only surviving child, raised alone, taught by tutors, only now being allowed to go to school to finish her education. The overwhelming influence on her life was her mother, and from her mother she was learning all the attributes of a Southern belle, as if the mother were creating in the all too willing girl the woman she herself had never quite become. Lizzie could flirt and charm and tantalize, even faint if necessary, with the best of them, but somehow none of it came naturally to her. It was as if she were playing a role that was demanded of her, and she behaved as if everything she did would be graded and commented on by her mother afterward. Which it was.

In her private world, her fantasy world, Lizzie might dream of a more dashing husband than Jass, a sweeping cavalier, but Jass was the reality: certainly rich enough, potentially handsome enough, and undoubtedly gentleman enough. They got on well together, and Lizzie thought she could manage him well enough to create in him, if not her ideal husband, then at least a reasonable facsimile. That they were both too young to contemplate marriage was hardly a factor. Young girls, and their parents, had to plan for the future.

She glanced at Sassy Jackson, as if to reassure herself that she was the prettiest present, and turned to watch Jass. Followed by a black who seemed to be his personal slave, Jass took the fence, and his horse cleared it with energy and graceful ease.

“Why”-Lizzie affected what she thought to be her most seductive drawl, and primped her hair-“your brother is positively gorgeous. Last time I saw him, he was all gangly and spotty. “

Sassy, aware of the subtext that was being prepared, giggled. She couldn’t stand Lizzie. She was so very-young.

On the veranda, Mrs. Perkins echoed her daughter’s sentiments. “What a fine young man he’s becoming,” she cooed. “Best keep him out of Elizabeth’s sight. She has an eye for a beau. “

Driven by some internal, matemal clock, Sally dismissed the idea out of hand. “Nonsense,” she snapped, “they’re both far too young.” The rebuff didn’t bother Mrs. Perkins, who did elaborate things with her fan, said “Mmmmm” in a way

that allowed, she hoped, considerable interpretation, and glanced at the boy's father, who glanced at her, and she knew she was in striking distance, at least, of the mother lode.

But Jass didn't stop and dismount, didn't join them on the veranda, didn't even attempt to fulfill the various expectations of him. Instead he slowed to a trot, waved cheerfully at his parents, and spurred his horse away, behind the house, Cap'n Jack following. To the weaving house, Sally knew.

To Easter.

"He's been fighting again," Sally said, perhaps to give Mrs. Perkins some doubts about her son's potential suitability. "He likes to pretend that we don't know." She didn't disapprove of fighting; she took the view of many pioneer mothers, that her door was always open to brave men and permanently closed to cowards, but since the death of A.J., she didn't want anything untoward to happen to Jass. She felt a sudden flurry of exasperation with the world and with the boy. "It's happening almost every week. You should talk to him."

James knew this, and saw it as a thing to be proud of in his son. -All young men fight," he said, and Mrs. Perkins concurred. "All men fight," she said. "It is part of being masculine."

So Sally had a fit of motherly pique instead. "He never brings me his shirts to mend," she complained, but James smiled. "You'd only give them to a slave."

"That's not the point," Sally insisted. "I'm his mother."

Lizzie had reasons for disappointment, too. She spent most of her life being desperately bored. She had been brought up to it and should have been used to it, but she wasn't. The only ripples in her life were school, which was quite fun, although, try as she might, she wasn't overly popular with the other girls and there were no young men around, and visiting, when she could persuade herself, if only because she had a perky personality, that she was popular, and there were

likely to be young men. Such as Jass. She'd spent the last hour waiting for him to come home, was bored with Sassy, who seemed much more interested in discussing her own suitors and playing mother to the three-year-old Jane Jackson than discussing Lizzie's future, and now here was Jass, looking gorgeousshe hadn't lied-and then he was gone.

"Why doesn't he come talk to us?" she complained. Sassy

shrugged. "He's probably been in a fight. Easter cleans him up and mends his clothes so that we won't know." She giggled again. "He's so silly."

"Easter?" Lizzie's antennae were out for potential rivals, and she knew of no young lady in the district called Easter.

"A slave girl," Sassy explained. "She does the weaving."

Lizzie was considerably relieved. "Oh," she said. "Is that all. "

Had Lizzie known more of the weaving house, her relief might have been short-lived. It hadn't changed much over the years; it still wasn't much of a place, a little shack nestled in a peaceful grove. The roof leaked in heavy rain, and it sorely needed a coat of paint, but the atmosphere inside was warm and comfortable and loving. Home is the familiar, home is where you are loved, and Jass knew that he was loved here, loved by Cap'n Jack and loved, without knowing that it was love, by Easter. He knew that his parents loved him, in their fashion, and his brothers and sisters, and he them, but when he thought of home it was as much this shabby shack as the great mansion on the hill. For this place was different. This was the cottage where he was king.

He brought his horse to a halt and dismounted. He knew he should have stopped to greet Mrs. Perkins and her daughter, but he didn't want Lizzie to see him battered and torn from his fight. "See to Morgan," he called, unnecessarily for both he and Cap'n Jack knew that the horse would be seen to, but an order given because he was the young Massa, and that's what good Massas did to

prove they were not insensible to the chores of routine. Cap'n Jack was content to oblige, beyond the fact that it was his job, because he was content that this young Massa, whom he, as much as anyone, he believed, had fashioned and shaped, would be, one day, his ol' Massa.

Easter had been at the loom, but on hearing the arrival of the horses, she glanced out of the window, saw the state Jass was in, and went to fetch water, iodine, and a cloth. Thirteen years old and still a little gangly, she held the promise of a beautiful woman, with all of her mother's gentle calm but a certain cheekiness as well-sparky, fiery quirks to her personality that might have been inherited from her father, or perhaps

came from being brought up in a somewhat privileged atmosphere. The sale of Annie was seldom referred to anymore, but it still had powerful resonance for those who could remember. For the blacks it signified the most blatant example of the white man's dominance that had ever occurred at The Forks. For the whites, particularly ol' Massa James, it represented the nadir of the treatment of slaves under his dominion, and he preferred to block the event from his mind. Easter had grown up in the shadow of that memory, and was consequently much indulged by the blacks to solace her for the outrage, by the whites to atone for their guilt. She had always lived in this house with Cap'n Jack, she had received some general schooling, although not, of course, reading and writing, in the big house with the Jackson daughters, and she had inherited the role of weaver without question or demur. Tiara had shown her the ways, and she seemed to have a natural talent for the skill, a rhythm and grace about her that made it a pleasure to watch her work and gave the resulting cloth a neatness and texture to be admired.

And she had grown up with Jass, who spent at least as much time here, with her, as anywhere, with anyone. As his constant companion, she found few doors closed to her, and although she had felt the sting of the switch, infrequently, as punishment for minor infringements of adult rules, she was a wellmannered girl who was mostly content with the confines of her existence. A small part of her,

of course, longed to live in the big house, or go to grand parties and wear pretty frocks, and another part of her wanted to be free, but only a part, and not a very large one. The concept of freedom, of being able to do what she wanted with her life, was a desirable ideal, but she had heard many stories of slaves, freed, whose lives were very much less than hers now. But then almost every slave's life was less than hers now, and if she was free, she might not have the thing she most wanted.

Because what she wanted was Jass. The fact that it was he who had occasionally inflicted the mild stinging pain of the switch was not without pleasure to her. It meant, in her mind, that she mattered to him.

And she knew how to get her own back.

He strode into the cottage like a husband coming home, and

stripped to the waist. "Fix my shirt," he said, throwing the garment to her. He took an empty corncob pipe from the shelf and sat in an old rocking chair by the empty fireplace. Easter came to him to tend his wounds and knew that only his pride needed real attention. "You gwine have some mighty bruises. "

Easter's recognition that he had fought hard and well mollified Jass a little. "It's always the same old rut," he complained. "They won't admit that we've got to expand the economy, and whenever I try to talk about it, they all say I'm advocating abolition-Owwwwww-for pity's sake! " He flinched at the sting of the iodine.

Easter ignored his yell, and carried on, as did Jass. —and I'm not saying we should abolish slavery, I'm saying we have to think beyond it-"

Easter hated talk of slavery and abolition. Most of the time she was able to convince herself of the lie that she wasn't really a slave, and this mystical new word, abolition, had frightening connotations, such as the possibility of not living at The Forks, of living somewhere else, of being apart from Jass. "Them's five-dollar words," she complained, hoping to shut him up, knowing she was wasting her breath.

“You’ve had learning; you know what they mean.” He puffed contentedly on the empty pipe, but she flared a little.

“You scare me when you talk like that! Freein’ slaves. Where would I go?

What would I do?”

Jass looked at her. She seemed at that moment so vulnerable, so in need of protection, that all he wanted to do was take her in his anns and hold her safe from the world, for the rest of her life. She made the boy feel manly.

“It’s never going to happen; it’s just silly talk,” he said gently. “This is your home and always will be.”

Then he smiled. “Besides,” he said, “whatever would I do without you?,”

which is what she had wanted to hear from the moment he came in the door, but she would not let him off the hook too easily-

“That’s all very well and fine, Massa,” she sniffed, “but I still don’t get to go to no wedding.”

He looked at her in genuine surprise, for he had been at

school when the invitations arrived and thought the visit of Mrs. Perkins and Lizzie to be purely social. “What wedding?”

Parson Dick needed no telling. News of it had reached the slaves days before the formal correspondence had reached the whites, but since it was to be a black wedding, between black folk, none of the slaves had felt any need to inform their masters, and although they heard rumors that some white folk were to be invited, none of them were sure if their Massa was on the list, although Parson Dick, who could speak three languages but couldn’t read or write, was fairly convinced that theJacksons were when he had taken the envelope to his Master’s study earlier that day.

“We will be going to Nashville next month, Parson Dick, to a wedding-” was as far as James got.

“Yes, sir, I know,” said the butler, to save time. And perhaps to score a point. James looked at him in amazement. The accuracy and speed of the slave grapevine was a constant and remarkable amusement to him.

Parson Dick was helpful. “Everybody talkin’ about it, sub. Alfred is marrying Miss Gracie.”

James laughed. “How is it that whenever anything happens in this country, the slaves all know about it before we do?”

“Jungle drums, perhaps, Massa,” Parson Dick ventured, maintaining a poker face. James was never sure quite how to take Parson Dick, although Mrs.

Perkins had no such hesitation. “That’s exactly right,” she cried. “Voodoo!

Sheer voodoo! White folk and nigras guests at the same wedding!”

Parson Dick looked at her. “Disgraceful, m’m, I agree,” but Mrs. Perkins’s skin was far too thick for such subtle sarcasm. “You see!” she crowed in triumph, reluctantly preparing to leave. “Even the nigras are agin it!”

Slaves had brought the Perkins landau to the house. Soon it would be sundown, and so it was time to go, but Mrs. Perkins was not anxious to depart without at least some discourse between Lizzie and Jass. Playing for time, she was also looking for ways to shake the Jacksons from their complaisancy.

“You don’t suppose she’ll actually allow nigras to dance with whites?” she gasped, but the wretched people wouldn’t even take that idea seriously.

They only laughed.

“It’s a wedding, my dear, not a revolution,” Sally tried to

placate her. Mrs. Perkins sniffed, taking a long time to put on her gloves. “You never know. Sarah’s obviously a freethinker. “

It was Lizzie who saw him first, face iodined, shirt damed, hovering at the side of the house, staring, she was sure, at her. She made a-hurried farewell to Sassy, and moved as quickly as feigned lack of interest would allow to be near him.

“Why, who’s this mess of a boy?” she asked the world, thus drawing everyone’s attention to their proximity. “It can’t be young James?”

Mrs. Perkins beamed in satisfaction; Sally concerned herself with tea things and Parson Dick; Sassy giggled and gave unnecessary orders to the slave nurse to tend little Jane.

But James stared at his son and Lizzie as if the best idea in all the world had just occurred to him.

Jass smiled shyly at her attention. “Miss Lizzie, you’re looking lovely,”

he said.

Generally, girls of his own age confused Jass, but he liked Lizzie. She was so pretty. Somehow, she always made him feel like a callow boy, but that didn’t matter because he had an exquisite revenge. Alone in his bed at night, when that vile thing happened to his body that demanded attention but could not be spoken of to anyone, or even considered in waking hours, he would fight against it and sometimes win. But sometimes the urge for the pleasure was so intense that he would lose the battle, and when he did, it was often Lizzie’s face that he imagined, and her golden hair, and lovely body. He had no clear idea of what the unclad white female form looked like, but he assumed, and was assured by his schoolmates, that it was simply a paler version of the black, and so he had an intimate familiarity with what he imagined Lizzie’s nakedness to be. It was his constant triumph over her perpetual skittishness with him.

Having no idea of what was in his mind, Lizzie rejected the spoken compliment. “Tush,” she drawled, “just thinking of these nigra nuptials makes me glow. Poor Mamma’s in a terfible pother.”

Jass was puzzled; he couldn’t imagine Lizzie missing out on a party. “You

won’t be going then?” he assumed.

Really, he could be quite dense at times, Lizzie thought,

just a country boy at heart. “Of course we’re going!” she explained.

“Everybody’s going. If only to see Miss Sarah make a fool of herself.”

Jass thought it would be a lot of fun. “I don’t expect I am,” he said ruefully. “I’m probably too young.”

Lizzie was slightly relieved, Now she’d be able to enjoy herself at the ball, without the bother of having to flirt with him. “Such a pity.” She was deeply insincere. “I might have saved you a place on my dance card.”

She decided she’d done quite enough work on him for one visit. She had years to achieve the union after all, and she was anxious to be gone.

They wouldn’t be home till after sunset now, and Lizzie hated driving at night, even with the security of the attendant slaves. It was so scary, night. She looked for a slave, and saw a gangly girl watching them.

“Bring me my shawl,” she demanded casually.

Easter had followed Jass to the house on some errand but, on seeing Lizzie, had forgotten what that errand was. She couldn’t believe Jass could like this girl, all pale and pouty, but was terrified that he might. For all her fantasies about Jass, she knew the reality was that he would eventually marry a white woman, a woman of his own kind, and Lizzie was the first indication that the once distant prospect was becoming a nearer reality, Hating Lizzie already, she picked up the shawl and, as she was about to put it on, let it fall to the ground.

Lizzie slapped her. “Fool girl! That’s best French chiffon!”

It wasn’t a hard slap, but for Easter it was worse than the sting of the switch, for it carried with it all of this woman’s ascendancy over her and thus,

eventually, Jass. It didn't help that she heard him saying, quite sharply, "Don't do that!"

Tears, not of pain, sprang to Easter's eyes, but she was too well trained, or too proud, to run away. She picked up the shawl.

"She's just a clumsy nigra," Lizzie insisted, flushing at the rebuke.

"We don't treat our slaves like that," Jass said, and with such authority that Lizzie wondered if he might be more of a match than she had bargained for. She snatched the shawl from Easter and flounced away to the landau.

"I declare, are you a nigra lover?" she said, loudly enough

for them all to hear, wanting, in some way, to hurt him, and knowing, from the dinnertime conversations of her parents, that Jass had problems at school because of his supposed liberal attitudes to the slaves. "It's a wonder you ain't going to Nashville."

Sally knew the slight was intended to hurt, and sprang to her son's defense. "Of course he'll be there." She turned to her astonished son.

"Your father and I were just discussing it. It's time you were introduced into society and met some young ladies."

She might as well have said "other" young ladies, Lizzie felt, for it was clear to her, in that moment, that the biggest obstacle to her future with Jass would be Sally. But Jass was beaming at her.

"We could have that dance," he said in transparent delight.

To Lizzie, the visit had been a disaster. She knew that she had a potential enemy in Sally, she knew she'd been told off for her natural treatment of a slave, and she saw a lifetime ahead of being trapped in marriage to a young man who was so wretchedly, perpetually nice. Didn't he have any idea of how society functioned? Were boys not taught these things at school? Did she have to do all

the work? She longed to think of a witty retort that would astound them all with its sophistication, but none came to her.

“Unfortunately, I remember, my card is full!” she said as she huffed into the carriage, and even that embarrassed her because they’d all know it was a lie, since they had no idea yet of what other young men had even been invited, let alone who would ask Lizzie to dance. She wanted the carriage to go, now, but her mother took forever to climb in, and wouldn’t stop saying goodbye, and to Lizzie it was all the most mor-tifying experience of her life.

Finally they were on the move, but she refused to turn and wave, as etiquette demanded, even though she knew it would mean a lecture from her mother as soon as they were off the property. Had she looked back, she would have been disappointed again, because her intended was not waving with the rest of his family. He’d gone racing off to tell Easter the good news that he was going to the wedding.

News that Easter took almost as badly as Lizzie. “That’s nice” was her only response, and it burst jass’s bubble of excitement more effectively than any of Lizzie’s barbs. “Just because that silly girl slapped you,”

he responded, thinking it would help. “I told her off.”

“And couldn’t take your eyes off her!”

Easter wouldn’t relent, and Jass didn’t know what to do; he was too young, too inexperienced in the ways of sparring women. “Don’t sass me!”

he snapped, and walked away. But he couldn’t let it go at that. Easter was his best friend, and he’d wanted her to share his fun. He turned back. “Damn you, Easter,” he yelled, “you’re no fun!” and continued walking away.

Immediately, Easter regretted her anger.

“I’m sorry, Massa Jass, I— she called, but not loudly enough for hirn to hear, and as immediately, she regretted her regret.

“Oh, damn you, too,” she cried, and this time he did hear. And smiled, as he walked away.

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Jass cut himself shaving, adding another tiny gash to the sev eral caused by Wesley’s fists. He staunched the blood with a cotton cloth, stared at himself in the mirror, and wondered if he would ever master the cutthroat razor. Cap’n Jack had taught him the use of it, had made it look easy, and whenever Jass watched his father shave, he seemed to flourish the per ilous instrument with a careless, harmless grace that Jass en vied. He didn’t shave often-he didn’t need to-but he enjoyed it; it made him feel grown-up. The first time he had ever done it, scraping away at the fuzzy down on his upper lip, it had given him a surging sense of masculinity that had thrilled him. Easter had shaved him once, for fun, under Cap’n Jack’s tutelage, but a similar feeling had occurred then, pro-

voking embarrassment and confusion in him, making Jass wonder if he was quite nonnal, if this thing happened to the other boys so often, and adding a new and disturbing, if unknown, dimension to his relationship with the slave girl.

He hoped the tiny nick would distract from the other wounds to his face, but staring in the mirror, he knew it was a forlorn wish. Those cuts and Easter’s iodine stains ensured that his family would know that he had been fighting, if they didn’t already, and his sister would giggle, his mother would make a disapproving speech, and his father would beam amiably at his son, and encourage Sassy’s ragging.

His body, though firm and taut, had the definition of a man's but the weight of a boy's, and he flexed his biceps, wondering if he would ever have the bulging muscles of Wesley and his older classmates. No longer a boy, not yet a man, he longed to be older, or younger again, or something, for he couldn't stand this netherworld he was living in. He still wasn't treated as a full-grown man, and the ways of adult men were confusing to him.

He wondered if he would ever understand girls, and wished they were all more like his mother, who was at least predictable. Lizzie's butterfly mind, leaping from one thought to apparently unconnected others, confused him, but it seemed to be a factor in all young women. His sisters did it too. He would be having a sensible conversation with them, and suddenly they would say something that seemed utterly logical to them, but which confounded Jass, as happened in his Latin class when he was going along swimmingly, and a new verb conjugation, or the unexpected use of a case, caused him to flounder.

He wondered why he thought about girls nearly all the time, why the very smell of them drove him mad, and why the closeness of Easter, tending his cuts, provoked such overwhelming urges.

Sometimes, he thought, the only woman he really understood was his mother.

The gong sounded downstairs. He was late for dinner. Just as always. He splashed water on his face to try to repair some of the damage, then hurried to put on his shirt and jacket.

The dining room looked grand, for Sally took especial pride

in it, trying to re-create here the dining room in Ireland that James so fondly remembered. The oil lamps, with their exquisite, hand-painted glass shades, seemed to make the burgundy velvet drapes glow and gave a rich sheen to the carved mahogany furniture. The diffusing lamplight softened the sometimes stem features of the family portraits hanging on the walls, for the painters liked to make their wealthy subjects look authoritative. The table linen was crisply starched, the silverware gleamed, and the smells wafting from the pantry were mouth-watering. There was always some formality about the evening meal at

The Forks, and the family was expected to dress for dinner, whether or not they had visitors, which they often did.

Tonight it was only the family. They stared at Jass as he hurried to his chair on his father's left. James glanced at the grandfather clock. "Cut yourself shaving?" he wondered. Sassy giggled. Sally glared at her and Jass blushed, but before he could reply, his father coughed and bowed his head.

They all followed suit, and James said grace. Sally rang a small bell, and Parson Dick marched in with the tureen, and Polly, with the plates.

There was a tiny silence while the soup, lentil with ham hocks, was served, no one knowing which way the conversation would jump.

Sally broke it, determined to let lass know she was vexed.

"I don't know why you always have to be fighting!" she admonished. Jass mumbled something about not starting it, and James came to his aid.

"Schoolboys' Debating Club?" He smiled at his son. Jass felt a sudden rush of temper.

"if only they would debate," he flared. "But the minute you start talking sense, they seem to think you're attacking the honor of the South! It's stupid to be so entirely reliant on one industry, one workforce. What if cotton suddenly went out of fashion, or something-"

Everyone laughed. Cotton was, is, and always would be. Cotton would never go out of fashion. It couldn't; there was nothing to replace it. You couldn't wear wool in the summer heat, and what would you do for bed linen?

"No one would have any clothes," Sassy said, which riled

Jass a little more. All girls ever seemed to think about was clothes.

"All right," he countered. "What if there was some bug or weevil that got into the cotton and destroyed it, something we couldn't control? We'd be bankrupt."

He had them there, he was sure of it, but hadn't reckoned on his father.

"Oh, I think we'd manage." James's voice was calm. "There are other crops, sugar and tobacco, after all."

"They aren't as profitable as cotton, and need as many slaves," Jass argued, but his father was benign.

"We do own rather a lot of land, and that never goes out of style." He turned to his son. "But that's why you keep getting into trouble, boy."

Jass hated to be called a boy, but loved it when his father spoke to him seriously, man to man. "To question cotton is to question the economic validity of the South—

"But what if the Feds abolish slavery?" Jass jumped in. "Or if the slaves revolted, like Nat Turner-"

The very name Nat Turner unsettled the women, it was the stuff of their worst nightmares. Sensing this, James tried to be calm, and ignored the interruption. "And to question slavery is to attack the South, which only gets you into more trouble."

Sally intervened, as much for herself as for her daughter. "Why don't you discuss this after dinner, in the other room?"

Sassy had gone very quiet. "Quite right," said James, and looked for a happier subject. "Are you all excited about the wedding?"

Soup done, Polly cleared the plates, and Parson Dick brought the roast to James to carve.

The change of course and subject had the desired effect. Sassy cheered up immediately, and Polly glanced at Parson Dick. They all had varying degrees of knowledge about the wedding, the whites and the blacks, from the invitation, from the Perkinses, or from the grapevine, although Jass, whose only sources were Easter and Lizzie, knew less than most.

"What's it all about?" he asked, and his family all spoke at once, to fill him in,

and in relief from the talk of Nat Turner. From the confusion of names, opinions, and gossip, Jass learned what he did not already know.

When President Jackson's son, Andrew Jackson, Jr., had recently married Sarah York, the president gave his new daughter-in-law a slave maid, Gracie, as a wedding gift. Alfred, never far from the president's side, had fallen in love with Gracie, and she accepted his offer of marriage.

Sarah, wanting the wedding to be celebrated in style, was organizing a grand function at the Hermitage, and had invited the gentry of the South, together with their most valued slaves, to attend. It was the inclusion of the slaves in the invitations that was causing the fuss.

"Can you imagine?" Sassy giggled. "Slaves? As guests?"

Jass was tickled pink. "What a grand idea," he laughed. "And not so very unusual-we often go to their weddings."

"To watch, or because we own them." Sassy shared some of Lizzie's outrage. "Never all mixed up together. No one will go!"

"I think most everyone will," James corrected his daughter. "Sarah is so close to the president. Who will turn her down?"

"Will you go, Papa?" Sassy asked. They all knew of the cooling of their father's friendship with the man who was now president. "I thought you and Uncle Andrew had a quarrel."

James shrugged it aside. "We've had our differences from time to time.

That's all over and done with."

"Andrew Jackson has been a good friend to this family," Sally said. "He helped us considerably in the early days."

She was only telling them what they all already knew, but felt she had to defend the days of their youth. Whatever her private opinion of Andrew, she knew that he was responsible for much of their considerable fortune.

“If it’s going to be such a grand occasion, what am I going to wear?”

Sassy wailed. “I can’t go in these old rags!”

Everyone laughed again. The “old rags” were gorgeous, handmade in Charleston, and worn twice at most, but a party atmosphere prevailed, and the rest of the meal was spent in a discussion of new clothes for Sally and Sassy, and of who might be attending the wedding and who might not.

Jass longed to be away. The talk of the dresses had interested him briefly, if only because they were soft, feminine things, but now he wanted to see Cap’n Jack, for he was still puzzled by Easter’s recent attitude, and needed older, wiser, male help.

As soon as they had given thanks for their meal, he begged to be excused, and scooted out of the room, to James’s disappointment, for he had been planning to talk to his son.

“Off to see Easter,” Sassy giggled, and she hurried away to find Angel, Sally’s personal maid, and plan new ball gowns.

Suddenly then, James and Sally were alone but for the slaves. James stared at his wife for a long moment. The years seemed to be making her more handsome, not less, and motherhood had given both a tranquillity and purpose that enhanced her personality. She was born to be what she is now, thought James, and hoped she loved him still, knowing that she did.

Parson coughed gently. “No,” said James, “I’ll take it here. “

Parson Dick poured a small glass of port, looked a question at Sally, who

shook her head slightly, and the butler and the maid left the room.

James sipped his port, and they sat in companionable silence for a while, the dull ticking of the grandfather clock a metronome to their thoughts.

Sally knew something was worrying her husband, and she guessed it had to do with Andrew. Ever since James Coffee's visit last week, when the two men had spent the entire afternoon in the study supposedly discussing business matters, James had been distracted. Well, she thought, he will tell me in his good time, if it's important, knowing that it was. James always shared his most worrying concerns with her eventually, unlike some men who treated their wives as decorative imbeciles when it came to business affairs. She could not imagine a better husband, and thanked her Maker that she had found this gentle, reasonable man. She saw his graying hair, the wrinkles around his eyes, and the thickening waistline, and it made not one jot of difference to her feelings for him. For this is how it was meant to be, she thought. This is what love is: We are friends as much as lovers, we will grow old together, and I would trust him, I do trust him, with my life. She prayed with all her heart for a similar contentment for her children.

Especially Jass. Because he was not born to the role of first son, she knew life was not easy for the boy. A.J. had been blessed with a more forceful personality. No one ever worried about A.J., for he seemed to understand naturally what was

expected of him, and even as a youth you could see in him the future head of the family, master of the estate, the slaves, and their fortunes. But Jass was different. Honest, caring, and studious, he was scrupulous in his attention to other people's feelings, and she knew that his eventual responsibilities as master would weigh heavily on him, for she saw in the blithe boy a wretched affliction for those in authority: Jass could always see both sides of every question.

Briefly, bitterly, she felt a sudden stab of almost inconsolable grief, and cursed God for taking A.J. from them, not just because she loved her firstbom-which she did with all her heart; his death had caused her untold pain-but also

because his presence would have made Jass's future so much easier. It hadn't mattered so much two years ago, when AT had been killed in that awful accident, because Jass had still been a boy, basking in the careless, carefree days of innocence. But it mattered now, as she watched him daily becoming more of a man, with a man's care, and she knew, if only from Mrs. Perkins's fan language, Lizzie's flirting, and James's too ready receptivity of their plot, that a man's future was being planned for him.

Not Lizzie, she begged, anyone but Lizzie, wanting for her son a woman who might more easily comprehend his forgiving nature and make considerably fewer demands on his gentle morality.

And then there was Easter.

As if tracking her thoughts, James smiled at her. "Easter's good for him,"

he said. He took a sip of brandy, and his tone was cautionary. "He's nearly a man, after all."

Yes, thought Sally, he's nearly a man. She felt a sudden flash of temper again. But he isn't a man yet, he's still a boy, and I want him to be that boy for as long as his heart desires. She yearned for the pioneer days of their youth, when building a life was more important than sustaining a fortune, for she knew that now they were rich, now they were people of consequence, what her son might want in a bride was secondary to the successional needs of a good marriage.

He's still a boy, her heart insisted. But she looked at her husband.

" Yes, " she agreed. " He's nearly a man. " She wasn't trying to avoid the inevitable, merely delay it. For as long as was humanly possible.

The young man in question was looking for advice about women, specifically Easter, from his mentor, Cap'n Jack.

“She’s growing up,” Cap’n Jack told Jass. “She want woman things.”

Jass grabbed at the only straw he felt confident with about girls. “You mean pretty dresses and things?”

Cap’n Jack smiled. He’d had a long talk with Easter and knew that her ambition ran to much more than a frock.

“And invitations to weddings an’ things.” Cap’n Jack dropped the tiny bombshell lightly.

Jass was astonished. “You mean, she wants to go? But that’s ridiculous, she’s too young, she’s not even a lady’s maid, she-”

“Don’t stop her wanting it, all the same,” Cap’n Jack responded.

Jass stared at the night. Fireflies sparkled in the long grass.

The slave quarters, a collection of shacks around a large clearing, were almost a second home away from home to Jass, for he spent almost as much time here as in the mansion or the weaving house. A bonfire, large pot of food simmering over it, burned in the middle of the clearing. Most of the slaves had already eaten and were relaxing as best they could, gathered in little groups outside their shacks. Somewhere Monkey Simon was strumming a banjo, and a mother was washing a child in an old bathtub.

A sense of tranquillity prevailed, for whatever resentments any of the younger, more hotheaded men felt for their status, no slave had run away from The Forks for years. There was no point in it.

Old Tiara, who had been Jass’s nurse and now cared for her young grandson, Isaac, sat on a broken-down rocker, the boy on her lap, discussing the coming wedding with anyone who cared to listen.

“Yo’ gwine be Alfred’s best man?” she called to Cap’n Jack, only a small distance away.

Cap’n Jack shook his head. “Ain’t seen too much of him. Not since the Massa and Massa Presyden’ fell out.”

He sorely missed his old friend but was proud of his status as most loyal slave to the president, whom he never called Massa Andrew anymore, but always Massa Presyden'.

"Alfred gettin' awful old," Tiara cackled. "Same like you. Time you was hitched agen, Cap'n Jack."

Her husband, Micah, was whittling on the stoop of their little shack.

"Hush, woman," he said, knowing the command was useless.

"Don't yo' shush me!" Tiara was indignant. "Cap'n Jack need a woman to look after him, cain't go on dreamin' 'bout Annie fo' evuh an' evuh."

Isaac, warm and secure against his grandmother's capacious bosom, stirred. "Who's Annie?" he asked.

"You hush too, boy," muttered Micah. "She ain't with us no more."

A slave child must learn early, at his mother's knee. Or his grandmother's, and Tiara was always ready to pick at an old sore, as much for the young Massa's benefit as Isaac's. "Don't you tell Isaac hush. No reason he cain't know what Massa did."

She was looking at Jass, but talking to Isaac. "She wer' Easter's mammy.

Massa sol' her away."

Jass, who ' had heard the story many times, but had no memory of it, was not listening. His mind was filled with images of Easter in a pretty dress rather than the simple homespun she usually wore.

"Weren't the Massa," Cap'n Jack said sharply. "Wer' the overseer, Harris."

Tiara laughed derisively. "Don't make no never mind. She got so]' away."

She hugged Isaac to her. “Things differen’ now,” she told the boy, “but in the ol’ days, hit didn’t make no never mind if’n a slave had family.

Massas sell anyone away if”n they had a mind. Sons from pappies. Mammies from sons.”

Micah stopped his whittling and stared at the fire. “Still happen, most places,” he said. There was no bitterness in his voice; it was a simple statement of fact. The only thing permanent to a slave was slavery.

“Not here,” Cap’n Jack insisted. “Massa wouldn’t let it.”

In Jass’s mind, the vision of Easter in a pretty frock gave way to Lizzie in the same frock. It shocked him from his reverie, and he heard Tiara speaking.

“Him Massa. An’ all Massas the same. Don’t give a hoot

‘bout. black folk, other’n to work their selves to the grave for ern.

-That’s tosh, Tiara,” Jass broke into the conversation, without rancor, for it happened all the time. “We look after you, don’t we?”

“Jes’ sayin’.” Tiara rocked in the gentle night. There was no point in starting an argument with Jass about it, for she would never win.

It was also true. Despite the visceral resentment many of the slaves felt about their servitude, the Jacksons looked after them reasonably well.

Furious with Harris for selling Annie, James, on his return to The Forks, had sacked the man instantly, and had spent many weeks searching for a suitable replacement. Edward Mitchell had come to him with good references that praised his work but complained of a certain leniency in his treatment of slaves, and James had hired him at once. A man who used the whip as punishment of last resort rather than weapon of first defense, he had made some improvements to conditions for the slaves, and they, in return, had given a somewhat better productivity. Slaves were never sold away now, and were only purchased when

absolutely necessary, both the Massa and the overseer preferring to train their own people, born and bred on the plantation. It was a poor substitute for freedom, but it was generally agreed that if you had to be a slave, The Forks was one of the better places to be.

If you had to be a slave. They all had a dream of freedom and prayed for a miracle that would somehow deliver them from their bondage, but the dreams and the prayers were tempered by the reality of their existence.

The known was preferable to the unknown, and although the younger men talked of running away, they had no clear idea of where they would run to, except the vague, distant North, Up South as the slaves called it, and between them and any viable sanctuary was a hostile, perilous environment that few believed they would survive.

In the chaos of gossip and hysteria that attended the Nat Turner rebellion, one of their number, Samuel, a rash young man, saw cause for hope and did run away. It was one of the few times when Mitchell had thought it necessary to display

his authority, and they had been locked in their quarters, even Cap'n Jack and Easter, the men shackled, until Samuel was returned. Mitchell employed slave catchers, with instructions that the runaway was not to be unduly harmed, and after a week they brought him back, hungry and miserable, bruised and bleeding from the unnecessary beating the catchers had insisted was necessary for his recapture. Samuel had been chained to a tree for a week, the time of his absence, through the blazing days of August, until Mitchell believed his promises that he would never attempt to escape again.

Samuel kept his word. For months he would not even talk of his time away, but as his wounds of spirit and body healed, he started to brag of it, the extent and unlikeliness of his adventures expanding with every telling, until they all devoutly wished he would shut up.

Freedom, then, was a double-edged sword, a longed-for dream and a terrifying prospect, and to someone of Tiara's years, not something she could easily imagine in her lifetime. But she hugged Isaac to her again, and begged sweet Jesus in heaven to make it a reality for him.

A distraction arrived, in the form of Parson Dick.

Immaculately attired, as always, Parson Dick looked considerably out of place in this community of field hands. Although black, he was more of an outsider here than the white youth, Jass.

"Cap'n Jack, the Massa want to see you," he called. "You too, Massa Jass.

" Duty done, he sniffed the air. "My, Missus Tiara, that pot likker sure smell fine-"

Although his elocution was usually flawless, Parson Dick could fall into slave idiom whenever it suited him. He thrived on knowledge, on gossip, loved to keep his finger on the pulse of the field slaves' thinking, and Tiara, an old sparring partner, was the key to that world.

Tiara glared at him. "Yo' get yo victuals up the big house, Parson Dick, where yo' belong. We ain't good enough fo' house niggers like yo'." But she nodded to her daughter, Minnie, who got up and went to the pot with a bowl.

" But you gettin' mighty thin, Parson Dick, on all that white livin',"

Tiara chortled. "Have some real food, mebbe put a little color back in yo' cheeks."

Everyone laughed, although they were never quite sure of Parson Dick. He settled comfortably on a log and accepted the bowl of pot likker from Minnie. "The Massa waitin'," he told Jass and Cap'n Jack, who now got up to leave.

There was a small silence, which Parson Dick broke, knowing that nothing would be teamed from Tiara without something in return. “Be a whole lot of stitchin’ goin’ on,” he began. “Gettin’ ready for the wedding.”

Tiara nodded. It was the introduction to gossip from the big house, which she loved. It was also the last thing Jass heard as he walked away, and it reminded him of Easter.

“I could ask my father,” he told Cap’n Jack. “But I don’t think he’d agree.”

“Mebbe,” Cap’n Jack said, and his tone told Jass to say nothing to James.

“Mebbe.”

Easter, bored with brushing her hair, had not joined the other slaves for the evening, as was her habit, because she was still miffed with Jass, and the world, and she wanted him to cQme to her. She looked out of the window and saw her father walking to the big house with Jass. She prayed that Cap’n Jack was telling him about her desire to go to the wedding, about which she had poured out her distressed heart to her father for a solid hour, and that Jass, being the young Massa, would do something about it.

Just in case God wasn’t in a listening mood, she crossed her fingers and allowed herself to dream.

28

Jass loved his father’s study. All the other rooms at The Forks reflected Sally’s personality, and although she had been re sponsible for decorating this room, his father’s untidiness pre vailed. The floor-to-ceiling shelves crammed with books, the clutter of heavy furniture, and the imposing oak desk sug gested a world where women seldom came-and they seldom

did, except as occasional visitors, or as maids, to clean.

James busied himself with the copious papers on the desk, for he was not looking forward to this interview with his son. Cap'n Jack waited near the door,

James looked at Jass, and his spirit failed him slightly. The boy simply looked too young to be a serious participant in the conversation James had in mind, so he delayed matters by turning his attention to Cap'n Jack.

"Our old friend Alfred is getting married at last," he announced, stating what was for everyone, by now, the obvious.

Cap'n Jack was courteous. "Yes, suh, I hear, suh."

James found the letter he pretended to have been looking for, which had never been lost.

" You'll be coming to Nashville, of course, to valet master Jass and myself. But there's more-"

He held out the letter. Cap'n Jack looked reluctant. Jass smiled to himself, for what was being played out was a continuing charade.

" I cain't read, suh," Cap'n Jack lied reasonably. "Tain't legal."

James was not in a mood to waste time. "For heaven's sake, you can read as well as I— he began, but knew he was wasting his breath. Whatever the truth of the matter, Cap'n Jack would never admit his education, even in the confines of this room, where he had no enemies.

"Oh, very well," James gave in, and glanced at the letter. "The president says that Alfred has requested you as his best man. Of course, you have my pen-nission."

Cap'n Jack smiled happily. "Why, that's wonderful news, suh. Will you write that I accept?"

" I already have," James said. "I thought you would like to know. Thank you, Cap'n Jack."

Jass guessed that his father was simply procrastinating, that he had something more serious he wanted to discuss, with Jass, but was playing for time with Cap'n Jack. Please don't let it be about girls, Jass sent up an urgent prayer to heaven. They'd had a brief aimless discussion of morality some months ago, which ended with his father's admonition, "You know about girls, I'm sure. Don't ever be discourteous, or unmannerly, or, damn it, base, toward them," and had left

whatever other information his son might need to Cap'n Jack, the men of the slave quarters, and the other boys at school. Jass had been even more embarrassed than James by his father's inconsequential ramblings and he now hoped Cap'n Jack wouldn't leave.

That part of his prayer was answered, for Cap'n Jack didn't go. He hovered by the door, until James, who had returned his attention to the papers on his desk, looked up. "What is it?" he asked.

"My daughter, suh, Easter. Annie's girl. She want so much to go to the wedding. Would mean a lot to her."

"Well, of course she can go," James interrupted, completely aware of the not so subtle emotional blackmail that was being used. Any mention of Annie stiffed his conscience, reminding him of things he would rather forget. Still, some role had to be found for Easter.

"She can maid Sassy. Angel can teach her." Angel was Sally's maid.

"Yes, suh, thank you very much, sub. I tell her tomorrow, and she learn good." Cap'n Jack was duly grateful, but a slight twinkle of triumphant conspiracy passed between him and Jass. "Good night, Massa."

Jass could hardly conceal the grin of delight that sneaked to his face.

Cap'n Jack gave the merest wink to Jass before bowing to his master and leaving, and somehow Jass understood that the secret was to be kept from Easter for a little while at least, and that he would be the one to tell her.

“Well,” said James, when they were alone. “Would you care for some port?”

Jass found himself caught in an agony of ambivalence, not for the first time that day. His father had never offered him port before, and part of Jass was cock-a-hoop that he seemed to have crossed some line of demarcation between boyhood and manhood with his father. Another part of him groaned inwardly. Almost certainly, this meant they were going to talk about girls.

“Perhaps a small one, sir.” He accepted the invitation, and James nodded at the decanter on his desk. Jass moved forward to pour himself a glass.

In the hall, Sally was fiddling, picking dead buds from flowers in a vase, when Cap’n Jack came out of the study. She looked at him and he at her. They were old conspirators, and he left the library door slightly open, so that Sally could hear the conversation within.

Then he looked for something equally trivial to do, and began trimming candles.

Jass sipped his port and thought it wonderful. He had seldom drunk any alcohol, except at celebrations, and then only watered wine. He loved the taste of this sweet, thick liquid, loved the gentle fire that traced through his body as the wine did its work, and loved the small sense of equality it gave him with his sometimes distant father.

“Do you like it?” James asked.

“Very much, sir,” Jass responded, nodding his head and taking another, confirming, sip of port.

There was a tiny silence, and then James took the plunge.

“It’s never been easy for me to discuss personal matters with you, Jass,”

he began, and, having begun, found it easier than he had expected. “There are things I thought I would not have to discuss with you, but because of your brother’s untimely death-”

He stopped, momentarily. A.J.‘s accident had caused him terrible grief.

Like Sally, he simply didn’t discuss it with anyone, and tried not to think about it. It had become easier, of course. Time had healed the worst of the pain, although the aching hurt still washed across him in unguarded moments, causing, if only for an instant, an overwhelming sense of loss and of the unfairness of it. He looked at Jass, and could not, in all honesty, see in his eager second son an adequate substitute for his first.

“With A.J. gone,” he continued, “you will now inherit all this.” The vague “all this” implied a considerable fortune. “We have never talked about it, and it’s time we did.”

11 Yes, sir,” Jass responded dutifully.

“It is not easy, Jass,” James said, wondering if he should call him James, “to be master of such responsibilities as I will leave to you. I hope, of course, that I will be with you for many years, and the assumption of your eventual role will be gradual. I will ease you into it, and you will always be able to come to me for advice and consideration.”

1 sound so pompous, thought James. Like my own father. What must the boy think of me? Why can’t I come to the heart of the matter?

“It is not easy being master,” he said again, unnecessarily, and stopped again. We’re getting nowhere, he thought.

” But,” he said, and knew it had to be now, “I won’t always be here. And if

anything should happen to me, I want you to be ready. Do you like the Perkins girl?”

It came as a small bolt from the blue, and Jass was thrown by it, although the connection was obvious to his father.

” Well, yes, I guess. Lizzie’s charming” was the best Jass could manage.

“She is also a most eligible heiress.” His father, having taken the plunge, waded on. “‘You’re too young to even contemplate anything-serious-with her, and if circumstances were different we would not be having this conversation. But—

Jass knew where they were going. In that “but” a whole future lay.

It was apparent to Sally too, still fiddling with dead flowers in the hall, and to Cap’n Jack, still uselessly trimming a wick that could scarcely be trimmed any more.

11

-you will have to marry eventually, and I hope it will be sooner rather than later. I was not a young man when I married your mother, and I sometimes regret that I did not find her earlier.”

He had completely lost track of how to say what he wanted, he knew, although his goal still beckoned him, if only he could reach it. Why is it so.difficult? he thought again, although he already knew the answer.

He was trying to control something that, ultimately, he did not believe was his to control. He lost his temper with himself.

“You must have sons, Jass!” he announced angrily. “Sons to inherit what I have created here.”

As soon as he said it, his anger at himself increased, for he knew he sounded even more pompous than before. Jass was puzzled by his father’s vehemence, but a second glass of port was making him bold.

“Of course, Papa,” he said. “I’m looking forward to being married one day.

But I was wondering about-” He found

the word difficult to say, for he was suddenly feeling a complex anger, too. Here he was with his father, drinking port and discussing his future as man and master, yet he was still being treated as an inadequate boy.

He felt an intense, burning need to communicate to his father that he wasn’t a boy anymore, he was a man, in charge of his own destiny. Suddenly he wanted answers from his father to some of the questions that had been puzzling him.

“I was wondering,” he repeated, “about love.”

James stared at his son, as if staggered by his impudence. Love, he thought, oh, love. That is the heart of it. That is what I should be discussing with him, and what I am trying to deny him. I am considering everything that matters—this house, this land, this estate, this family, this fortune-but not the thing that matters most. I have not considered his heart. Is that what my father did to me?

To his son he said: “Love?”

Jass began a confused apology. “Where that comes into it. I mean, I know all about girls and things, and getting married, and babies, all the fellows at school talk about that all the time, but no one’s ever talked to me about love.”

It was eminently fair and reasonable, thought James, and completely unanswerable. He struggled to describe the indescribable. “Love is-”

What? A young man’s dream? An intangible, foolish, impractical something, dictated by the heart, not the head, which if undirected could sabotage everything he had worked for, all he had built, the tiny empire he had created. Yet it was a most basic right of any man-and, he knew, totally unpredictable, perhaps dangerously so. He had never questioned, would never have challenged, A.J.‘s right to love whom he would, for A.J. would have loved the right woman, James was sure. A.J.‘s sense of responsibility would have dictated to his heart, and he would have chosen a bride who would have been worthy mistress of this mansion. Why was he not so sure that Jass would do the same?

“I hope you will find love,” he assured his son, longing for Sally to help. “But marriage and love do not necessarily go hand in hand.”

They do, his heart insisted, they do. Let the boy love. But let him love wisely, his mind responded.

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“When I first met your mother, I thought she was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen, and I-wanted her-at that moment-”

The unguarded thought had slipped out. So anxious was he to impress duty on his son that he was not embarrassed by the admission of lust.

—but I didn’t love her then, I didn’t know her, I’d never spoken to her.

Love came with knowledge. The more I came to know her, the more I came to love her, until now I cannot bear to be apart from her. “

Sally’s heart sang a sweet duet. This is my husband, whom I love. And this is my son, who has dared my husband to speak of love.

“But we married for different reasons,” she hardly heard James continue.

“We married for mutual benefit; we married to have a family. Love came later.”

Whatever motives she had for wanting to overhear the conversation in the study now seemed irrelevant to Sally, for she knew her son would love whom he would, marry whom he must. She hoped they would be one and the same woman, but if not, she hardly cared, for the boy would be his own man, and that, for Sally, was all that mattered. Only one tiny cloud troubled her otherwise flawless horizon. She moved to the study and softly she closed the door.

“Easter’s turned into a fine girl,” she said to Cap’n Jack.

“Yes, missus,” the slave replied.

“Master James is very fond of her.”

“Yes, missus.”

Sally moved away, as if that were the end of the conversation, but, at the stairs, turned back.

“Let us hope he doesn’t become-too fond-of her.” Her meaning was precisely clear, and Cap’n Jack looked at her steadily.

“No, missus.”

Why did she fear this so? Why, in this moment of otherwise complete certainty about Jass’s character, did she have such profound misgivings about a simple slave girl?

Sally moved in what she often thought was a hypocritical hemisphere with regard to her son’s libido. She knew, as did all Southern mothers, that most of their young men found their

first sexual pleasures with slave girls, and that many of these young men continued to take that pleasure throughout their adult life. She knew-they all did-of older male friends who kept a black mistress, or several concubines, or of those who simply raped their slave women as and when the urge took them. It was seldom discussed by the women, and then only “behind the fan,” but oh, how busy those fans could be, feeding the embers of gossip into lurid flames of speculation.

In the more sensational cases, such as that of Mr. Herrisvale, only three counties away, who had taken his black concubine into the main house, into the very nuptial bed, relegating his true and lovely white wife to the second-best guest room, the fans had worked overtime, for every white woman could only too easily imagine herself in a similar predicament. The dear, sweet Mrs.

Herrisvale had absolutely no recourse of any kind. As wife she was chattel, to be done with as her husband wished-in many ways, Sally frequently thought, no better than a slave-and no matter how much her family might rail on her behalf, the husband was lord of the estate and king of the lives of those who dwelt therein, and if he was of a cantankerous nature, like Mr. Herrisvale, all the suffering Edna could do was bear the indignity with as much fortitude as she could muster. Her outraged brothers had demanded her return to them, with or without her substantial dowry, but Mr. Herrisvale had kept them at bay with shotguns and the full force of the law. “We can only be grateful,” swooned the fanning gossips, “that our dear husbands are reasonable, faithful, Christian men.”

But were they? What woman could be sure that her husband was not finding some pleasure, at least, in the slave quarters, and if he was, what might this lead to? Surely Edna Herrisvale had put her complete faith and trust in her husband, and look at her now. Yet for many of the wives, the slave concubines were a considerable relief, for it meant fewer sexual demands on them. And a mightier relief too, on behalf of their daughters. for if the young beaux had no other outlet for their base desires, the virginity of every young Southern belle was potentially at risk, and for a girl to go to the altar already deflowered was a shame no mother could bear.

Still Sally worried about Jass’s fondness for Easter. She

guessed that any eventual physical relationship with Easter would keep him satisfied and happy, for the realist in her knew that her son must be developing carnal needs, and she prayed that he would eventually find a bride who would not be too obtuse in the bedroom. Yet that other, maternal, side of her dreamed that her boy might be temperate of desire, that he would remain a virgin until his marriage, and that he would be as sweet and undemanding of his spouse in bed as he was in life. That this hope somehow emasculated her son was a demon fear she worked very hard to keep at bay.

She wanted for Jass a simple life, she told herself, and Easter was an unnecessary complication.

“Good night, Cap’n Jack,” she said, and went up the stairs. If anyone had

influence over Easter and lass it was Cap'n Jack, and she was relying on him to do his utmost to put restraints on their friendship.

"Good night, Missus Sally," Cap'n Jack replied, and started turning down lamps.

What Sally did not understand, for she had no knowledge of it, was the bitter complexity of Cap'n Jack's ambition. Unable to persuade Annie's new owner to part with his new slave, even for considerable sums of money, Sally had spent countless hours comforting Cap'n Jack, and believed that his pain had eventually healed.

She was wrong.

All the furious vows of vengeance Cap'n Jack had made the day Annie was sold away still raged beneath his compliant exterior. He had no clear idea of how to achieve his goal, or even what his goal might be, but he had the slave's gift of patience, and fortune seemed to be playing directly into his hands. The deep friendship of his daughter and Jass held promise of future fruition, and the death of A.J. would eventually elevate Jass to a position in which Cap'n Jack's primitive oath to subvert his father's expectation of him would have some real hope of success. The stories of Mr. Herrisvale and his black concubine had encouraged exaggerated ambitions in Cap'n Jack, and the thought of Easter as surrogate mistress of this mansion, however disparaged by the world at large, put him at direct variance with what Sally wanted. If this were not possible, if Easter's ascendancy, or his own, were

less spectacular, something else would happen, Cap'n Jack was sure, for the actual focus of his triumph didn't matter. The revenge itself was all.

Leaving a few candles burning to light his Massas, young and old, to bed, he left the hall and went out into the night.

In the study, James thought things were going rather well. "A family is everything, Jass, in this world of ours. Without family we are nothing, and you

everything, Jass, in this world of ours. Without family we are nothing, and you must start thinking of your future. You will meet many young women, of course, at Nashville, and when you go to college-"

He felt the need to invite some comment from his son, since he was trying to exercise such control over the boy's future. "Are you content with New Jersey?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, very much," saidJass. "If they'll have me-"

"You won't have a problem there," James said. "Money talks, even to the old Yankee colleges." He could have bitten his tongue off; he was even denying his son's scholastic ability. So he looked for a compliment.

"Always remember that you are a highly desirable young man, if only because of your position and your wealth, and you will be much sought after. But you could do a lot worse than Lizzie Perkins. She's a fine girl, and would make a splendid wife, I'm sure. Talk to her, call on her, get to know her."

"Yes, sir." Jass was dutiful again.

"Good," said his father, anxious now for it to be over. "Well-that's about it. Best to bed, eh? It's getting late."

"Yes, sir." Jass, who had been hoping for another glass of port, went to the door.

James could not let it go at that. He'd botched the whole thing, had probably confused the boy more than clarified anything, and felt that nagging sense of guilt.

"I've been very proud of you, Jass," he said, with a sudden rush of affection. "You've never let me down."

"Thank you, Papa." Jass was astonished. This was the closest his father had ever come to an expression of love. A similar, sudden affection flooded him, and the boy in him wanted to run to his father, give him the biggest hug of his life, and tell him how much he loved him. The man in him knew that such an action would only embarrass both of them and prob-

ably destroy the moment, so he smiled and pretended to be a drunk instead, “And thank you for the port.” He grinned and left the room, staggering in mock inebriation.

James laughed. Jass was a good lad; he’d behaved beautifully in the face of a difficult interview. Now that it was over, James couldn’t remember why he had thought it so urgent, why it couldn’t have waited a day, a week, a month, a year, for pressuring the young man to accept the concept of an arranged marriage was something that could easily have been delayed until the boy had sown at least a few of his wild oats.

He stared at the silver horse’s head, and it reminded him again, as it always did, of his own father, and of the bitter disappointment that James had seen in his father’s face the last time they had spoken. How proud of me he should be now, he thought, with all that I have achieved.

Then he looked at the letter from Andrew lying on his desk, and it reminded him of what John Coffee had said to him a week ago, and he remembered why the necessity of the talk with Jass had seemed to have such a pressing urgency.

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Upstairs in his room, Jass undressed and slipped on his nightshirt. All his senses were sparkling, and he decided he must be a little tipsy. Gee, it felt good. He wondered if he dared sneak downstairs for another glass, but he opened the windows, saw the light spilling onto the veranda, and knew that his father was still in his study. He gazed at the stars, and smelled the heady scent of jasmine. Crickets sang, frogs croaked, and somewhere an owl hooted.

He turned down the oil lamp, and the room was bathed in moonlight. He got into bed, loving the crisp linen sheets, and sank into the luxurious embrace of the

feather mattress, which he blessed his mother for buying a year ago. Until then, all

the children had slept on sturdy, unyielding horsehair, but after A.J.

died it was as if his mother suddenly rejected the spartan upbringing they had previously endured; she went on a shopping spree, replacing all the bed furnishings in the children's rooms. She had even bought a new mattress for A.J.'s bed, although, of course, he would never sleep on it.

Jass, lost in a fluffy cloud of eiderdown, looked at his brother's bed, next to his own. It was kept freshly made up, the linen changed each week, the sheets turned down by the maid each night, as if Sally believed that one day A.J. would come home to her, and rest again where he belonged.

It should be moved out, he thought, knowing he would never dare to suggest it to his mother. A.J. is gone. This is my room now.

That he had even had the thought astonished him. His mind was racing in unfamiliar territories he knew must be a result of the conversation with his father. He was James Jackson the Third. He was the young master now!

It was the first time he fully appreciated the implications that everyone else had accepted the day A.J. died. He would inherit The Forks of Cypress, and its welfare and his family's welfare devolved onto him. He would marry and have sons and they would inherit it from him and their sons after them. A great dynasty flowered in his mind and suddenly he understood the full importance of what his father had so obscurely presented to him. Sweetened by the wine, the awesome responsibility did not daunt him, but aroused and excited him. He saw himself dispensing wisdom and justice at his father's desk, in his father's study, in his father's stead. He would stand for public office, as his father had done.

He imagined himself as host at a great levee, his family around him, and his wife by his side.

But who would she be, he wondered, and how would he know who was the right woman for him? How would he know if he loved her, and how would he know if the woman he loved could fulfill the role that her position as his wife demanded? Would it be Lizzie? Did he love Lizzie?

The only answer he had was to the last question, and it was no. He didn't love Lizzie. At least, he didn't think so. Certainly, he could see Lizzie swarming around The Forks of Cypress, but he couldn't imagine Lizzie in his mother's role, and

surely could not imagine her as mother to his children. Maybe his father was right, maybe love came when you got to know someone, and he determined he would do all in his power to get to know Lizzie better, and see if love developed.

Jass had only the haziest notion of what love might be. His sisters seemed sure of it, their noses always stuck in those awful romances, penny dreadfuls his mother called them, that were full of swooning heroines and knights in shining armor, and Jass couldn't imagine himself in that latter role. Mary Ellen had been so convinced of her love for Abram Hunt that she made plans to elope with him when she was only sixteen, hardly older than Jass was now. Abram was actually waiting at the gate for her when Sally heard about it, and stopped them. A lot of tears were shed by Mary Ellen before her parents relented and gave their permission. And his cousin Mary Kirkman, in Nashville, did elope, with Richard Call, who was Uncle Andrew's ADC. Old Aunt Eleanor was furious, and vowed that she'd never speak to her daughter again, and when Uncle Andrew went to try to talk her round, she had fired a shotgun at him.

So what was it that girls knew about love and he didn't? How did you find out? Did you read books'? Did you ask girls?

Then again, his father had said that he would be attractive to girls, if only because of his position and his wealth. He wondered how much his inheritance would be, but had as little conception of the reality of money as he had about love. He knew a sum had been made over to him at his birth, as with his brothers

and sisters-* and was told he would never have to worry about money, bui lie had no idea what the original sum was, or what it was now, for his father handled all those things. Nor could he begin to estimate what his father must be worth. Leviathan had earned over $100,000 in stud fees he knew, because the newspapers said so, and horses were only a hobby for James, so what about his enormous holdings in land? He supposed that he would have to take care of the money one day, and he determined to make a closer study of financial matters in the future.

A new and much more interesting fantasy developed. If he was so rich, so eligible, so much sought after by potential brides, he would be able to have his choice of the prettiest women around.

Images of every young woman he'd ever met flooded into his mind and danced across his ceiling, led by Lizzie, in a dazzling array of seductive beauty, and he allowed himself to be flattered and cajoled, teased and flirted with by each and every one of them, the dashing eye at the center of their hurricane of gorgeous attentions. Other, darker-skinned, women appeared now, vying with the whites, and memories of all the pretty slave girls he had ever seen jostled with their young mistresses in his febrile imagination.

But the only one who made him smile was Easter.

If Jass's dreams were sweet with lust, his father's thoughts were filled with foreboding. It cannot all be a house of cards, he thought, but dreaded that it was.

He poured another glass of port. He shouldn't drink so much. He knew it, his doctor had proscribed it, but he needed the comfort of oblivion now.

Surely he was unassailable? He had never done anything criminal or illegal, he was president of the Alabama Senate, he was rich, and the value of the land that he owned was enormous.

If he owned the land. There was the problem. He had never had a moment's doubt about his right of title to any of it: He had paid for it, it was all property registered with the requisite authorities, it was signed, sealed, and delivered in his name.

"Damn you, Andrew!" he said out loud. "And damn me, too," he said a moment later, more softly. "I should never have had any part of it." But if he had never had any part of it, he would not be what he was now.

John Coffee had called a week ago, alone, without his family. The general was in an expansive mood, and he and James behaved as they always did, with considerable civility to each other, as if they were still friends.

They shook hands, and spent a pleasant hour discussing the affairs of Alabama and the country, and gossiping about political enemies.

Then John was silent for a while, as if something was troubling him, and stared out of the window.

"Andrew is determined upon the removal of the Indians," he said softly.

Everyone knew of Andrew's determination to persuadeor force-the remaining Indians to migrate. Many had made

the long journey to the promised sanctuaries in the West, but their stories of deprivation along the way made miserable hearing. Many others had simply refused to leave the land that was sacred to them, and were suffering for their obstinacy. In six months, the final payment was to be made to the Chickasaw, and they were obligated to leave their land. No one knew how peacefully they might go, for the Cherokee in Georgia were resisting every effort to make them leave.

"For God's sake, why doesn't he let them stay where they are?" James said. "They have suffered enough."

John turned to look at him. Really, the man is a fool, he thought, a weak, dangerous fool. But a gullible one.

“it is for their own good,” he said reasonably. “They cannot live amongst us as equals; they don’t understand our ways, and have no desire to learn. Their language is useless in a white society, and their superstitions incompatible with our Christian religion. Nor can they live amongst us in their tribal fashion. Their hunting grounds are lost to them, and they have no understanding of the proper use of the good land they occupy, and so they starve.”

It was the usual justification for their removal. As more and more white encroachments were made, legally or otherwise, on Indian land, the condition of the native peoples was rapidly degenerating, James knew. The election of Andrew to the presidency had only accelerated this. Sensing a friend in Washington, Georgia extended its laws over the Cherokee in its state, abolishing the tribal units, denying them the right to vote, to seek legal redress in court, to prospect for the gold that had been discovered on their land, and Indian land on which there was no farm or village was appropriated for white settlement. It was an illegal move-Indian lands were actually under the protection of the federal government-but Andrew had completely supported the state’s actions.

Mississippi and Alabama had followed suit, and intertribal disputes, rampant bribery and corruption among the white Indian agents, alien diseases, the abuse of alcohol, and the Indians’ failure to understand, and therefore compete, in the white marketplace were only adding to the Indian misery. Small bands of desperate Creek and Cherokee were attacking white farms in Georgia. People were calling it a war, but all they wanted was food.

“If they do not go, they will die,” John continued. “If they do go, they can live, in peace and freedom, governing themselves, in the new lands in the West. The many treaties we have made with the more reasonable Indians guarantee it.”

It was a harsh position, James thought, but probably a realistic one. As to the treaties, there had been so many, warranting so much that had later been denied,

they seemed irrelevant. His heart bled for the disadvantaged, dispossessed race.

“But a number of liberal hearts are bleeding for the savages,” John now said. “The wretched Henry Clay is adamantly opposed to the removal, if only to spite Andrew, and he has much support. They want to have the treaties declared invalid.” James knew this too; the newspapers were full of it.

With guilt as its wind, fear, like an approaching, unwelcome storm, appeared on James’s untroubled horizon. Even if only one of Andrew’s treaties with the Indians was renounced, any of them could be, including the one that governed this land. His land.

“Which treaties?” he wondered, with an outward calm he did not feel.

“Any of them,” John echoed James’s private thoughts. “All of them, perhaps.”

It was an old business, which James thought long forgotten, but it had come back to haunt him.

“But we won the land in war! We paid them for it!” James almost shouted.

“They took the money! It is a contract in law.”

“Well, yes, we did,” John remained calm. “But we didn’t pay them very much, nothing like the true worth-”

“The land has no worth, it has no value, unless it is available for white settlement!” It was so simple to James, he couldn’t understand that it could be questioned.

“Sometimes you sound exactly like Andrew.” John smiled, as if to reassure his troubled host, but actually having the reverse effect, which was what he intended.

An awful realization hit James, somewhere in the pit of his stomach. I am no better than the rest of them, he thought. Let the Indians have their land, but other land, not mine.

“It is being said in Washington that Andrew obtained the

treaty corruptly, by paying massive bribes," John continued. "Particularly to the Colbert brothers."

He had used the singular "treaty," not the plural "treaties," and now he added a clarification that might have been an afterthought but was, in reality, well rehearsed.

"I mean the Chickasaw treaty."

James already knew that. "There were no bribes," he insisted, knowing he was lying.

John sighed. "Well, actually, there were," he said. "And you were at the heart of it, It would be a pity if evidence of them ever came to light, don't you think?" Suddenly he was bored with James, and wanted the business done.

James was visibly shaken, and John was satisfied. "I did nothing," James insisted. "I bought my land and paid for it, and that is all."

"You also lent a very great deal of money to Andrew at that time." John twisted the knife. "What do you think that money was for?"

James could only fall back on a lame excuse. "To pay for a war," he said.

John barely disguised his irritation. "Don't be naive," he snapped. "The war was over. It was to ensure the victory."

There wasn't much more to do. "It is said there are letters between Andrew and yourself that might shed more light on the matter. Andrew believes that any letters he wrote you should be returned to him, for his safekeeping." He was brisk now.

James knew exactly which letters he meant, and knew they were political dynamite. He kept them locked in a strongbox. They were safe there; he didn't want them in anyone else's hands. Especially not John's.

In that moment, he hated John. The man's always been a bully, he thought, and found some streak of stubbornness in himself, if not exactly courage.

"They are private correspondence," he said. "If Andrew personally requested the return of them, and if I believed it necessary, I would deliver them myself."

John saw the flash of temper in James, and knew it was a waste of time to argue.

"Very well. I have to go to Washington tomorrow, to an—

swer questions about the treaties. May I tell Andrew that you will keep those letters private? I need hardly say that publication of them could cause very serious damage to your considerable reputation."

James nodded. He hardly heard the rest of their conversation, didn't remember John saying goodbye, although he responded by rote, but sat at his desk, trying to come to terms with what John had said.

Driving home in his carriage, John was well satisfied with his afternoon's work. He did not despise the Indians; he simply saw them as savage beasts, lions in a jungle, who stood in the way of progress. He resented their unproductive occupation of so much rich land, and believed the white man's right to that land was divinely ordained. He wished the Indians no especial, individual harm. Like Andrew, he could be kind and generous to those who were useful to him or allied themselves to him in the prosecution of his ideals. He particularly admired the warriors, the braves, worthy prey for his military skill.

He did despise weak men, especially those lily-livered dunces in Washington. How could he explain to them, here in the prosperous afternoon of his life, what it had been like, all those years ago, in the exultant morning? Andrew had led them in battle against the Creek and they had won, obtaining a cession of land in the victory spoils, but no one, not even he as subsequent surveyor appointed by Andrew, knew how much land the Creek could be said to own. Indian lands had

no borders or boundaries as white men understood them. The Cherokee, who had aided them in the war against the Creek, laid claim to much of it, as did the Chickasaw. So Andrew and John, by force, persuasion, coercion, and-it was a fact of life-bribery, had simply appropriated as much of the land as they could.

And what did it matter if money had been paid to a couple of individual Chickasaw in the treaty for their land, rather than to the whole tribe?

The government had what it wanted, which was the point, and the Chickasaw would soon be gone. Why make a fuss about it now?

He had also come to despise James.

James was only a tiny fragment in the elaborate jigsaw of

Indian removal that Andrew was piecing together. So much gossip and misplaced indignation surrounded his dealings with the Indians that one more scandal could hardly matter. But the imminent removal of the Chickasaw, and the desperate plight of the Cherokee, was causing furious argument, especially from the hypocritical New Englanders, who had annihilated or banished their Indian populations long ago and now claimed piety. Positive information that a treaty had been obtained illegally, by bribes, could cause the whole thing to blow up in their faces. James had that proof because his money had paid the bribes, and despite the repair work that had been done to the rift between them, Andrew no longer completely trusted James, and thought he should be neutralized. Which John, very effectively, had done.

Put the fear of God in him, he thought. He sneezed, and wondered if he was catching a summer cold.

James didn’t eat that night, didn’t even leave his study, and the tray that was sent in to him remained untouched. He thought of burning the incriminating letters, destroying them and proof of his culpability forever, but he also knew that as long as he possessed them they gave him powerful ascendancy over Andrew. Sally probed him gently later, in bed that night, but he could not discuss his

Sally probed him gently later, in bed that night, but he could not discuss his troubles with her, or with anyone, until he had come to terms with them himself. In the week since John's visit, he had worried and fretted about what had been said, and it was only today that he had been able to come to any decisions.

It was unlikely, he was sure, that his titles to his land would be questioned. Sure, but not certain. The battle between the states and the federal government as to who had what authority over which land was a continuing and complex one. He remembered that, years ago, half the squatters in what was now Kentucky had lost title when Washington had denied North Carolina's assumed rights to the territory. He remembered that the most prolitable business for any lawyer on the frontier was from the endless claims and counterclaims as to who owned land. He had thought all the dealings of the Cypress Land Company to have an unassailable basis in law, but he had come to understand over the years, when he admitted the truth

to himself, that much of what the company had sold had been obtained by Andrew and John Coffee in an appalling, and probably illegal, land grab.

And it was certain that if anyone found out that his money had paid the bribes to the Colbert brothers, it would destroy his political career and the reputation he had worked so hard to achieve.

The darkest truth of all was one he could hardly bear to admit, for James had come to believe that what had been done, was being done, to the Indians was no different from what the British had done to his countrymen in Ireland. He now believed himself to be as corrupt as his sometime oppressors, a complaisant pawn in a dreadful colonization, subjugation, and degradation of a native people by a foreign power.

That he was not alone in feeling this didn't help. Many of his associates, business and political, were now expressing concern over what had been wrought, but it was especially bitter for James, for he saw he had been so easily corrupted. Settled and affluent, away from Andrew's powerful influence, he had

begun to believe that every acre he had purchased was contributing to the destruction of a race. Nor did he seriously believe Andrew's, or John's, or anyone's, assertions that the removal would be the end of it. The frantically expanding society that was America needed ever more space, and going west was the clarion call of the pioneers. James had heard it, like uncountable others, and it still beckoned him; he longed to go farther still, to the fabled land of California. Realistically, he knew that he would never see the distant Pacific, but others would, driving the Indians before them until the proud few who were left stood with their backs to the boundless ocean, and then where would they go?

The bitter fires of injustices he had seen in his youth, in Ireland, were kindled again in his heart. Enough, he thought, we have done enough. It must be stopped.

Andrew was the lock and the letters were the key. Andrew could make anything happen; the world seemed to jump to his command. If Andrew could be persuaded against the removal, if he could be made to see the necessity of an accommodation with the Indians, of learning how to live compatibly with them, side by side, perhaps something could be salvaged from the wreck.

The arrival of the wedding invitation that morning had fallen on his troubled soul like manna from heaven. Andrew's accompanying letter had been in a reasonable, placatory tone, making few references to the subject that was so vexing James. He would see Andrew in Nashville, at the wedding, and persuade him of the folly of the path on which he was so resolutely determined, or else he would threaten to publish the letters. That would make Andrew see sense. And at heart, he told himself, Andrew loved the Indians; they were his children, he their father.

Having come to a decision, or having decided on a course of action at least, James felt much better, and another concern presented itself for his attention.

Jass.

He was quite proud of his son-no one could deny Jass's sense of duty and honor-but part of him longed for another son, or different aspects to the one he had. Oh, for a son who would give his father a sense of exhilaration and danger, make him stand in awe of the giant that sprang from his loins, a son like the man James had always wanted to be.

A son who would ride a streak of lightning. Someone had said that once about Andrew, and it summed up James's longings exactly. Andrew rode lightning. So had Sean. A.J. might have. He wasn't so sure about Jass.

He saw too much of himself in Jass, and just as a shepherd is a king to his flock, so a son is a monument to the man who created him.

For James lived in an agony of self-doubt. As with his present guilt about the Indians, the high moralist in him believed that slavery was an unbearable sin. He wanted to free them all, to set up this estate as a utopian ideal of what a prosperous, well-managed and slaveless plantation could be. The other part of him, the pragmatic, practical, materially ambitious part, had cast his lot with Andrew, and thus with the institutions the South espoused, and thus with slavery and with the appropriation of Indian land. And it had made him rich. And it had given him power. His father's final words to him were a distant whisper now, but they still had painful echoes:

"You will never amount to anything."

He had proved his father wrong. He had amounted to something, whatever the cost, and he took a resonating pride in the

achievement. The Forks of Cypress and all it represented were his and would remain so, by right of title and right of tenure. But would Jass ever amount to anything? That was the constant, secret fear the father held for his son. The fear would never be voiced, for he had sworn that he would never say to his sons what his father had said to him, though when he had first made that vow, he had no conception that he might have a son who would even warrant the thought.

Jass would amount to something; he would see to it. If the boy could not do it

for himself, it was up to the father to do it for him. So lass must marry, and marry well, sooner rather than later, and have sons, and those sons would ensure the future prosperity of all he had striven so very hard to achieve.

He was drunk now, he knew it, and found himself staring at a dreadful truth. He hadn't worked so very hard for anything. It had all come to him from someone else's largess. A man more daring than he had given him everything he owned, crumbs from a giant's table. He hadn't ridden on any streak of lightning, merely on Andrew's coattails.

The absolute inadequacy he now felt, together with the drink, made him sentimental. His thoughts turned to A.J., and to the sons he might have had. Waves of loss washed over James, and he found himself crying, tears that might have been for his dead boy, but were as much for himself.

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Early next morning, Easter was hanging newly dyed cloth on the line to dry when she became aware that Jass was nearby. She looked at him, wondering if he had news for her. Cap'n Jack had shrugged his shoulders when she asked him if he'd said anything to the Massa about the wedding, and ordered her not to fill her head with dreams. But she didn't want to believe him.

Jass was lounging against a tree with a silly grin on his

face, watching her. He knew something, she was sure. Why didn't he tell her?

"Pretty color," he said. The cloth, still dripping wet, was dyed a deep reddish brown.

Easter lost her temper. "You got nuttin' better to do than stare at me?"

she demanded. She jammed the clothes prop under the line, and stalked away to the weaving house.

“It’s all right,” he called after her, laughing. “You can go, You’ll be Sassy’s maid. And you can wear a pretty frock and everything.”

Her reaction was not delayed for an instant. She squealed with delight, and ran toward him. He met her halfway and she jumped into his arms.

Elated by her joy, he swirled her round and round in the air and knocked into the clothes prop, which dragged the line down on top of them, and now they were rolling together on the ground, covered in the wet cloth.

Laughing together, without a care in the world, until he was on top of her looking into her eyes, and seemed to be looking, she felt, into her very soul, and she could see inside him, almost to his heart, when suddenly something changed.

In that moment, all of Sally’s fears had come true.

Jass pulled himself away.from her, got up and turned his back, as if to hide himself from her.

“Look at my clothes,” he said, angrily.

Easter wasn’t sure what had happened. It had been so wonderful, locked in his laughing embrace, the warmest place in all the world, and then she’d felt this unaccustomed hardness pressing against her belly. She knew what it was-she was not a stupid girl-and it didn’t bother her. It felt natural and right. Clearly, it bothered Jass.

She wanted to say something to calm him, to let him know that she loved that special closeness of him, that he could do anything he wanted with her, but she feared his rejection.

“Yo’ mammy gwine be mad,” she ventured. “That dye don’t come out.”

He muttered something about fixing his clothes, and walked away. She didn’t know he was vowing that he would see less of her from now on.

She looked at her own clothes. They were covered in dye, too, and Easter let